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MEDITATIONS
UPON
VARIOUS AND IMPORTANT SUBJECTS,
AND SHORT PRAYERS ANNEXED.

With a PREFACE by the Reverend Mr. HERVEY,
AUTHOR of MEDITATIONS among the Tombs, &c. &c.

To which is now added,

SUBMISSION
TO THE
RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD,

OR,

The Necessity of trusting to a better Righteousness than our
own, opened and defended, in a plain, practical Discourse
on the Epistle to the Romans, chap. x. ver. 3.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

“Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them; that thy pro-
fitting may appear to all.” 1 Tim. iv. 15.

By **BENJAMIN JENKS,**
Late Rector of Harley in Shropshire, and Chaplain to the
Right Honourable the Earl of Bradford.

VOL. I.

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T O T H E

R E A D E R.

WHEN I consider the practice of recommending books, as implying some respectable regard to a man's own judgment, I undertake it with reluctance ; but, when I consider it, as exercising an act of friendship to my fellow-students in the school of Christ, I execute it with pleasure.

There are those, I am informed, who blame me for commending the Works of others : or, which is much the same thing, for commending them with any degree of zeal and affection. Since cold commendation, or faint applause, is justly reputed an artful flight, to these persons I shall only reply, That, if their own actions, or their own compositions were concerned, I verily believe, they, even they, would *forgive me this wrong* *.

A 2

Far

* 2 Cor. xii. 13,

Far from obtruding myself into the chair of Moses *; far from presuming to dictate, to prescribe, or so much as to direct; I would only imitate the four leprous men, *at the entering in of the gate of Samaria* †; having found silver, and gold, and raiment, they could not forbear proclaiming the news, and communicating the spoil, to their fellow-citizens. When I find a treasure, incomparably more precious; when I find a teacher of wisdom, and a guide to glory, why should I hold my peace? why should I enjoy these benefits myself alone? why should I not, like those honest, though calamitous exiles, tell the glad tidings in the city, and invite my neighbours to partake of the blessings?

These blessings, through the divine goodness, I have found in Jenks's Meditations; which are, I think, the most distinguished among all his valuable writings †. Level to an ordinary capacity; yet
capable

* Matt. xxiii. 2.

† 2 Kings vii. 3, 8, 9.

‡ "Mr. Jenks's Writings, as far as I am able to collect, are as follow: those marked in this manner *, are at present out of print; but it is to be hoped, they will not long continue so."

* The Liberty of Prayer asserted, and guarded from Licentiousness, octavo, 3d edition, price 2s.

* Two

P R E F A C E.

capable of entertaining a refined taste. Not void of beauty and delicacy; yet more especially adapted to enlighten the understanding, to impress the conscience, and build up the soul in faith, in holiness, and in joy.

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Every Man's ready Companion, twelves, price 1s.—As I have taken the liberty to speak my sentiments concerning the Meditations, let my friend and physician Dr. Stonhouse be permitted to speak the merit of this performance. His testimony, I question not, will give pleasure to the reader, as it has done justice to the author. See the Supplement to Dr. Stonhouse's Advice to a patient, page 67, of the 7th edition.

“ Jenks' every Man's ready Companion, consists of reflections on some of the most important texts of Scripture,
“ ture,

contracted within the small compass of two or three pages; for which reason, I cannot but apprehend, they may be particularly serviceable in the family, as well as in the closet; that one of these short essays, distinctly or repeatedly read amongst our domestics, may be more advantageous, than the hasty perusal of a much larger composition.

There is scarce any circumstance of the Christian life, which solicits the assistance of a spiritual physician, but may be accommodated with seasonable and suitable relief, from this ample dispensatory of *edification, exhortation, and comfort* *. Here are (if I may pursue the medicinal allusion) cordials, to cheer the drooping; restoratives, to heal the backsliding; stimulatives, to quicken the supine; with lenitives, to ease the anguish of conscience, and make *the bones which sin has broken, to rejoice* †.—Neither are we clogged with a tedious multiplicity of remedies, in any case of distress; nor wearied with a dry detail of all that can be said, upon any point of inquiry. On the contrary; the most spirited doctrines, and the

* 1 Cor. xiv. 3.

† Psal. li. 8.

the most sovereign consolations, are both skilfully selected, and pertinently applied; with this well-judged design, of improving and exhilarating the mind, without over-charging or burdening the memory.

I would submit it, with the utmost deference, to the consideration of my *younger* brethren in the ministry, Whether it might not be a very profitable exercise, to pursue the hints, and enlarge the plan, of these compendious treatises. Whether, by digesting them into proper divisions, and introducing, under each division, a more full and circumstantial display of the subject, we might not form popular and useful discourses for the pulpit? Such a practice, I persuade myself, might considerably facilitate our preparations for the public service; would stock our own minds with a set of the most important and affecting truths; and render our ministrations more acceptable to others, yet in no respect dishonourable to ourselves. As such a *transformation* is very different from a *theft*; and the most likely way to commence originals, is, to work upon such excellent models.

Let me only add—That I know one person, to whom these books have been highly delightful, and eminently beneficial, have very much contributed

to exalt his apprehensions of divine grace, and to establish his faith in the divine JESUS. That they may be equally, or rather more abundantly, beneficial and delightful to the public, is the wish, the hope, the prayer of

Their obliged,

humble servant,

*Weston-Favell, near
Northampton,
October 30, 1756.*

JAMES HERVEY.

M E-

MEDITATIONS.

INTRODUCTION,

Reflecting upon Meditation itself.

TO meditate, what is it, my soul? 'Tis not only to glance at a subject; or to throw away some desultory frikking thoughts upon it; nor yet to study it further, only to find out truth, and get some better notions in our heads; but it is to pore and dwell upon the serious matter, so as to affect our hearts, and improve our practice. It is amusing, to kindle the fire of love, and zeal, and holy resolution, and heavenly devotion. And though we have already some right knowledge of the thing, meditation rouses the drowfy reason, to make a review, and deeper observations upon it, that it may not lie dead and buried as an useless thing, which does us no manner of good. Notwithstanding we have the flowers in our garden, and can tell their names, and smells, and colours: yet the bee and the alembic go deeper, to extract honey and spirits out of them; and meditation does that work of the bee.

bee and the alembic, to gather sweetness even out of weeds, and wholesome instructions from common observations. It is a kind of sermonizing within ourselves, and not suffering a truth to go, till we have imprinted it on our minds, and wrote it down in our hearts. For, as it is not continual eating and drinking, without a leisurely digestion, that nourishes the body: so it is not the hearing or reading all before us, or a formal rote of talking what comes next us, that will make our souls the wiser or better: if we do not make the matter our own, by a deliberate rumination, and pausing upon it, and turning it over and over in our thoughts, till we have made somewhat of it to stay by us, that may prove of great concern, and good use to us. We must not lightly reflect, but ponder and dwell upon the profitable subjects, till we find and feel their profit, and turn and wind this plough to and fro, till we have made furrows in our minds, deep enough to receive, and cover, and cherish the good seed, that it may grow up to a happy increase.

O my soul! thou hast a family of thoughts and affections within thee; they crowd in upon one another, and for want of due regulation and good employment, they run all into a tumult and hurry, and rather disturb and hinder thee, than prove any servants of use and benefit to thee. Thy province and care, then, must be to find them business, that they may not be idle and have nothing to do: and also to choose fit matter for them to work upon; and to set and keep them so on work the right way, that they may not be roving and impertinent, and taken up all among vanities and trifles: and that thou mayest not keep a rude disorderly house, but still find thy servants somewhat to do that shall turn to good account. When they are so active and fit for great and noble operation, and can fly all over the world, and up to heaven, and down again, even
in

in a moment, O let them have work, worthy their sprightly powers, and vast capacities to perform: lash out the crowd of vain cogitations, and vile affections, and entertain and welcome, and make much of the divine guests, those weighty thoughts, and heavenly desires, that are sent as messengers of love from above.

Thus let me commune with my own heart, to get into the true understanding of myself, and whet the truths of God's word upon my soul, and preach over to myself, what has been delivered by others, that I may not only have it floating in my head, but safely disposed of in the good treasury of my heart; that I may have the experimental knowledge, which shall not only make me skilful in conversation, but wise to salvation; let the word of Christ dwell in me richly in all wisdom; not only now and then knock at my door, but keep house in me: and in the law of the Lord let me meditate day and night: O may I so parley with my soul, to get a fair and full hearing of the matters which most concern me, that they may not be thrust out for paultry stuff to come and fill up the room; but that the momentous eternal things may be lodged and retained in a sure place, and have their due force to stand me in the greatest stead. That my reins may instruct me, and my heart indite good matter and meditation, as the pump draw it up, and set my affections a-float. And thus let me keep a serious religion on foot, beyond the reach of the world's eye, where my Father sees in secret; and by this means I shall have a book continually about me, and within me, to turn over, and there register and ponder what God hath said in his word, and what he has done in the world, and particularly for my soul, herewith to entertain myself at home and abroad; in my solitude, and at all times: so that I need not ever to want the best company, and the best

best employment, and the best satisfaction in the world.

THE PRAYER.

“ **U** NTO thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
 “ So I would do: I aim and strive to do it:
 “ but my heart hangs back as an unweildy log, in-
 “ clining all to the earth: O work and wind it up
 “ heavenward. Draw me, Lord, and I will run
 “ after thee. Stock and furnish my mind with
 “ such pure and innocent, useful and excellent me-
 “ ditations, as may suppress and exclude all imper-
 “ tinent and pernicious cogitations. That my
 “ thoughts may not abuse and mislead me, but my
 “ heart cherish good motions, and my musing
 “ kindle holy flames; and out of the good trea-
 “ sure, wherewith thou shalt enrich me, I may
 “ produce that which is good; and the medita-
 “ tions of my heart may be acceptable in thy sight,
 “ O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Amen.”

MEDITATION I.

Of God, as incomprehensible.

T HAT there is a God (my soul) is as sure as
 that I am; or that any thing in the world is,
 which without him could never have been. And
 they that do not know God, “ even by the things
 “ that are made, are without excuse.” Rom. i. 20.
 “ They were called the Sons of Belial, that knew
 “ not the Lord,” 1 Sam. ii. 12. ’Tis every one’s
 duty, “ to understand and seek after God:” and it
 is also their felicity, even “ Life eternal, to know
 “ him,”

"him," John xvii. 3. But by searching to find out the Almighty to perfection; this is a knowledge too wonderful and high for me to attain to. His being without any beginning or end, and his presence every where, without any limitation or bounds, I am sure of, but the manner of his eternal existence, and of his universal presence, I am at a loss to account for. What the Lord said to Moses of himself, "I AM THAT I AM;" is more than my words can tell, or my heart conceive. Now we see but in a glass darkly: our weak sight will not reach, nor endure to behold his glory. No, 'tis not on this side heaven, but within the veil, that we shall "know him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. Somewhat of God I see and know: but there is infinitely more hid from my eyes; of which I can frame no adequate notion: a bottomless abyss, where I may sooner lose myself, than discover what I seek. I must not think to measure and hold the ocean in the palm of my hand, but be content here to sit down in ignorance, and humble admiration. For God would not be the infinite being that he is, could the poor shallow creature comprehend him. When he dwells in light inaccessible, that very light, instead of helping me to see him, as much bars my sight of him, even as clouds and darkness round about him; and where I perceive there is more and more still beyond, further than my eyes can carry me; even that unbounded prospect delights, as well as puzzles me; and there in extasy and wonder I must fall down and adore, what I am not able to grasp and master. Here my reason must yield itself vanquished, and give way to faith and lowly veneration, to take their places and help me out; while I believe, that all here is greater than I can conceive; and profoundly worship him that is so much above me; I must not think to get the full understanding of such a glorious infinite Majesty, who

who fills heaven and earth; and even the heavens of heavens cannot contain him. How then can a poor worm, a bit of animated clay, be able to deal with Him!

O my soul, as vast a reach as thou hast, yet here thou must confess thy impotence, to comprehend the Incomprehensible, and take up with a deep and humble wonder, where there is no pretending to a compleat and perfect understanding. Such knowledge is above thy reach: and 'tis too daring and idle, to aim at things impossible. Staring the sun now in the face will sooner spoil thy sight than mend thy prospect. Thou must stay then, till thou art fitted and fortified for the open vision of God, and wait in his light, to see the true light: yea, to know even as alio thou art known. And in the mean time throw thyself down under the feet of that most high and immense Deity; who (as he is represented, 1 Tim. vi. 16.) “dwells in the brightness, which no man can approach to: whom no man hath seen, or can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

THE PRAYER.

“**G**REAT GOD! Thou art infinitely above me; and I cannot know thee as thou art. But what I am not able to comprehend, I admire; and what I admire, I desire with all my soul to adore. O gracious Lord, I beseech thee, compassionate and relieve my infirmities, and open and impart thyself to my weak understanding, in such manner that I may know thee more distinctly and truly, where I cannot do it worthily and perfectly. O give me such right apprehensions of the glorious object of my worship, that I may fear thee, and love thee, and adore and serve thee, as God, and as my God, and my supreme and only satisfying God, blessed for ever. Amen.”

MEDITA-

MEDITATION II.

Of God, to be seen in his creatures.

GOD, that is invifible in himfelf, whom no mortal can view by a direct intuition, with eyes of flefh; yet, by reflection, may be feen in the feveral mirrors that he has fet up in the world; even his creatures, his word, and my own confcience. His creatures are the glafs, wherein we fee, though darkly, yet fo certainly, that from thence we can conclude, not only his divine being, but his almighty power, his wonderful wifdom, and his infinite goodnefs. The creation is that mighty volume, continually expanded, and lying open to the view of all; and fo fuited, even to the capacities of the moft unlearned, that they, who cannot read a word in any other book, yet here may fpell out fomewhat of God, all over the frame of the world! in the make and motion, the ufe and order, the variety and ornament of all things that appear in heaven and earth, which make up a rich furniture, not only for our bodily needs and comforts; but for our intellectual entertainment and delight.

This world is as the great fhadow of God's fubftantial being; and like the curtain, or thin veil, thro' which I may difcern (behind) the eternal, omnipotent CREATOR: or rather, the wide and mighty theatre that holds forth God to thy view, my foul, in his vifible effects; that is too pure for bodily eyes to difcern, in his incomprehenfible effence. As the hand pointing, and turning round the index without the church, tells thee that there is a clock within, which caufes the motion: fo every living and moving creature, which thou feeft, is as an index, to point thee to the great Maker and Mover

of all. And something thou mayest gather even out of every object before thee: as oft as thou wilt set thy thoughts to work this way, by a sacred chymistry, to extract pure spirit out of gross matter. And this is the easiest notion thou canst frame of God, to look upon him as the first cause and great maker of all things. This (as lying next to sense) is the readiest way of "seeking the Lord; to feel "after him, and find him," (as the apostle expresses it, Acts xvii. 27.) When thou dost stand still, and behold what he has done, andallest into a contemplation of the things that are seen, and makest thy observations upon the works of his hands: for God has scattered the memorials and notices of himself so thick every-where round about thee, that if thou wilt but take a survey of the world, with the eyes of any serious consideration, thou canst not miss of learning him, in the school of the creatures, which will all read thee silent lectures, and preach to thy very senses. Even the brutes and mutes will be thy casuists, to resolve thy conscience, not only, that God is; but how great, and wise, and good he is. And all the creatures must be struck out of being, before God can be out of thy mind. Here the light of nature will shew thee so much of the glorious Deity, as will render thy ignorance and disregard of him without apology: for they will be speechless in the judgment, that come not to understand the invisible things of God, even by the things that do appear, and will not glorify him as God, that so discovers himself to the world, Rom. i. 20, 21. Whether or no, that knowledge of God will save them, if they have no other than it, 'tis enough to damp them if they do not see, and own, and revere, and observe him according to it. "The "Lord shall destroy them, because they regard not "his works, nor the operation of his hands," Psalm xxviii. 5.

But

But sure, my soul, the atheist rather speaks the wishes of his heart, that there were no God, than the persuasion of his mind, that there is none, when he has left such manifest prints of himself in all the creatures, that are so many clouds of witnesses, with one consent, to testify of him, and for him. For that they are, 'tis evident: and that they should make themselves, is impossible, when as nothing can do that; seeing it must be, before it can operate; and if it made itself, it did the mightiest work before ever it was. Now, when I look up to the heavens above, and again cast down my eyes upon this earth beneath, I know they must have a builder and maker: and I am as sure, that none but an almighty power could ever produce them. The heavens speak for themselves, though they could not frame themselves, Psal. xix. 1. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work." Those mighty glorious orbs proclaim, not only his being, but his praises; that contrived and erected them at first; and keeps them in all their beautiful order, and punctual motions, to this day. And the earth is not only a fair habitation, but a school of instruction, to all of us whom it harbours. When we observe the generation and mechanism of plants and animals, how every one of them is fitted and provided for its own subsistence, and for the propagation of its species; how one thing subserves another; and all senses and faculties have entertainments and objects provided for them: yea, how the most silly and contemptible creatures every day produce the effects, and do the works which themselves know nothing of: and so could never invent and manage them by any art or forecast of their own: as when they all produce their like; and some of them (as the bees) in their most curious and regular fabrics, shew such mathematics, as
all

all the wit of man cannot imitate. In their comba and cells, there is somewhat as sweet to the contemplative soul, as the honey itself can be to the body's taste : for here appears plain an over-ruling wisdom and counsel, that directs and acts the poor weak instruments, to accomplish such wonderful performances, as are far above their own conduct ; and not like any the random works of blind chance ; but sure to be some of his manifold works, who in wisdom hath made them all.

O my soul, thus employ and gratify thy inquisitive, prying humour, to criticise upon the mighty effects of nature, and therein discover, and admire, and adore the glorious author. Fetch in such materials at the gates of thy senses, as may make the thoughts of God familiar to thy mind. When the works of the Lord are so great, and fought out of all that have pleasure therein. O let it be thy noble pleasure, to make such diligent search ; and thus devour the creatures, with a holy epicurism, to make thy meditation of God sweet, that thou mayest be glad in the Lord. O think how amiable is that original cause of all the beauty, sweetness, and loveliness in the world ! How immense that power, which reared the stupendous pile of heaven and earth ! How bottomless that wisdom, which has so marshalled out his innumerable hosts ; that though they be contraries and enemies, there is never the least disturbance, but exact order, and perpetual harmony among them ! How redundant and overflowing that goodness, which still nourishes and cherishes the whole creation ; gives the variety of appetites, and prepares food to the gust of every creature ; and spreads a table, to feast all the family in heaven and earth ! O come, worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord thy Maker : that brought thee out of nothing, and so soon can dash the creature to pieces, as a potter's vessel. Admire his patience,

tience, in sparing thee: when what thou countest the basest things, have not carried it so basely towards him; nor brought him such dishonour, in breaking their ranks, as thou hast done. And bless his name, for the pre-eminence he has given thee, my soul, above the rest; in creating thee after his own image; as the hidden spring and principal agent, in every business: though (like him) thou art still out of sight. O know from whence thou camest; and to whom thou owest thyself. Let him that made thee, have the use of thee. And as he has formed thee for himself, to him devote thyself: yea, delight to do his pleasure, in the enjoyment of every comfortable creature. And bless him that has furnished out the vast, and even infinite stores of heaven and earth, for the sake and service of man. But here I must end, where there is no end. O observe and acknowledge him; fear and love him: admire and praise him in all. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be all glory for ever. Amen.

THE PRAYER.

“**L**ORD, thou hast not left thyself without
“witness amongst us; nor art thou far from
“every one of us: but we may see the marks of
“thy presence, and thy power, and wisdom, and
“goodness in all the creatures on every side us. O
“give me the sacred skill, and spiritual understand-
“ing, to discern, and admire, and love, and bless
“my God, in every thing that I behold: that I
“may not live without thee in the world; but
“may see all full of God. And do thou, Lord,
“make me glad, through thy work; and let me
“triumph in the works of thy hands; not only in
“the fabric of nature; but especially in thy new
“creating of me in Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION III.

Of God, as the Preserver of all.

O My soul! the same God that made all things, it is, who upholds them, by the word of his power: that powerful word, which spake them into being at first, when he said, let them be, and they were, does still keep them in being; and when he signifies his pleasure for their preservation; they continue, and hold their station. Though individuals drop off; yet he keeps up all the several kinds: so that notwithstanding the succession of new water, the same river still runs on in its course. And this mighty sustentation bears up the pillars of the world, till the end of time, when he will slacken the cordage of nature, and (withholding his hand) suffer it to sink under its own weight. And O! what power have the creatures to keep themselves, any more than they had to make themselves! For, indeed, preservation is a sort of continued creation; an efflux of the same omnipotent energy, to support them from falling into nothing, as to extract them out of it. And so the great Father of the universe works even hitherto: and upon him, (the only independent being, and firm basis of the world,) hang all the ranks of creatures in it, for life, and breath, and all things. He that first breathed into my nostrils the breath of life, still holds thee, my soul, in life. "And man lives not by bread alone, but every word proceeding out of the mouth of God." Though he raises up a new supply for us every year, on the face of the earth; yet all would not do, if his blessing did not make our bread the staff to bear us up. Himself, indeed, is our life, and the length of our days: and while he holds us up, we are safe,

life, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; but when he suspends his influence, we wear off, and waste away, and return to our dust.

GOD is the LORD JEHOVAH, whose sole prerogative it is, to be of himself, as the only central, self-existent being, that has all within himself, and borrows not at all from any else. He alone can evermore say, I am (*semper idem*) the eternal source and fountain of all life and essence, unchangeable and immoveable, without any flux, or shadow of turning; giving to all, and receiving from none. But the creature is a precarious being, that has no sufficiency at home; nothing in itself, but what it receives; to have, and to hold, from above. Its very Nature is to be dependent on its Maker, as well as to be derived from him: And hangs as much upon his will and bounty, even as the sunbeams do on that mighty luminary. It has, and is nothing, but (*durante beneplacito,*) at pure courtesy; and there is only the divine power and pleasure between it and mere nothing.

O my soul, how is all this forgotten by such as can set up for themselves, as if they were no creatures, at another's finding; but complete deities, at their own disposing, that could stand upon their own foundation; and grow upon their own root; and carry all before them, by their own ability, wisdom, conduct, and goodness: still to command their own safety; to set death and trouble at defiance; and live on, and flourish, during their own pleasure? O that poor little drops and crumbs of derivative being should so proudly take upon them, as if they had all in their own hands: and by thus arrogating to themselves, but destroy themselves, and swell into bubbles till they burst! My soul, be not thou like them, to forget God that made thee; and grow unmindful of the rock that begat thee. But remember who keeps thee, and feeds the lamp
of

of thy life every moment : the God in whose hands my breath is, to whom I owe myself and all : my great preserver, that has drawn out the weak thread of my life to such a length, and in many imminent dangers, has interposed to save it, when I thought it just going. O how often have I found him nigh to me, in such perilous cases, to command deliverances for me? and bid me live, even when I had the sentence of death in myself! and without his perpetual concurrence and assistance, I could not stir a foot, nor heave up a hand, nor fetch a breath, nor subsist another moment.

And the same ever-living, and all-sustaining God, my soul, is the preserver of my spiritual, as well as of my natural life. That better life of grace, as it is a plant of my heavenly Father's planting; so of his dressing and cherishing. And O! how worthy is it of God, to keep the exotic tender offspring alive and verdant in such a cold and ill-conditioned soil; and when brushed with such rough blasts of temptations, and environed with such malignant neighbours on every side! O my soul, to him that has quickened thee in Christ Jesus, and made thee alive unto God, still look, and beg for fresh supplies of the new and holy life, that he may never forsake this work of his own hands, but inspect and keep it night and day: And not only secure thee from foul falling, but carry thee on in a lively growing, to ripen thee for glory: And, (with that best of all preservations) preserve thee to his heavenly kingdom.

T H E P R A Y E R.

“ **T**HOU, Lord, art he that tookest me out of
 “ my mother's womb, and by thee, I have
 “ been holden up ever since I was born. In thee
 “ I ever live, and move, and am : and as thou hast
 “ made

"made me, and not I myself; so neither can I act
 "or subsist without thy perpetual concurrence and
 "assistance. O make me duly sensible of my whole
 "dependence upon thee; and that all which ever
 "I have is from thee: that still I am in thy hands,
 "and still thou holdest my soul in life, and givest
 "unto me life, and breath, and all things. O give
 "me grace also, I beseech thee, to live to thee; as
 "I do live by thee, my great and only preserver;
 "whose name be ever blessed. Amen."

MEDITATION IV.

Of God, as omniscient.

IF the eye of the master make the servant busy,
 O my soul, how should I bestir me in the way
 of my duty, under the inspection of my great Master
 in heaven, who from thence looks upon all the
 inhabitants of the earth, and whose "eyes behold,
 "and his eye-lids try, the children of men!" Yea,
 he is as narrowly intent upon every particular creature,
 as if he had never a one else but that in the
 world to look after. Though eye-service is reprove-
 able in the servants of men; and they are counted
 none of the best, that will do their offices well, no
 longer than the master's eye is upon them; yet if I
 am an eye-servant of God, I shall be a good and
 faithful servant; because his eye is never off me:
 But he is continually aware of me, and thoroughly
 searches and knows me, and every thing that be-
 longs to me: so that to say, "the Lord is not far
 "from every one of us," (as Acts xvii. 27.) would
 be but a dilute and flat expression, if it did not im-
 mediately follow, "for in him we live, and move,
 "and have our being." He not only surrounds
 me, and hems me in on every side; but he is ever

with me, and within me, as the very life of my life, and the soul of my soul. Nor is he only every where in the world, filling all heaven and earth : but the whole world is in God, wrapt up in his mighty essence, who invisibly pervades it, and reaches infinitely beyond it.

That then, which to me, would be distracting and impossible, to see and mind every thing at once, is to him so ready and natural, that he does it with the greatest ease : yea, he cannot but do it. And sure he may, with as much facility, regard them, as preserve them every one. I am sure, he does the latter ; and I may be no less certain, that he must needs do the former ; or else his understanding would not be infinite, nor he know all things. But he is the all-wise, and the only-wise God, that has the fountain of wisdom, as well as of life, in himself. And derives from thence, to every intelligent being, all the wisdom that they have. Every one of their buckets, greater or lesser, are filled out of his immense ocean ; “ and he that planted the ear, “ shall not he hear ? he that formed the eye, shall “ not he see ? ” He hears and sees, without any ears or eyes, properly so called. And he that teacheth man all his knowledge, knows a nearer and surer way, without the faculties and organs, that we are fain to do it by. He looks immediately into the heart, and searches not only that, but the reins, those occult vessels, that lie most out of sight, covered with the fat of the loins : those reins, that are the seat and source of desires, he has possessed them, Psal. cxxxix. 13. And has them more in his keeping, than I have them in my own ; still to see which way I incline, and how I stand affected. His eye never sleeps or winks ; and whether I remember him or not, he cannot be forgetful of me, nor removed from me, whithersoever I betake me. If I take the wings of the morning, which in a moment carry
day

day to the most distant parts of the horizon ; and though I could outstrip the sun, and keep pace with the light ; which, in a trice, is darted from one side of heaven to the other, he would be there before me, and ere I am aware, his eye would be upon me, and his hand take hold of me. No man can hide or pass unseen to him, though no man hath seen him at any time.

O my soul, remember what a presence I am still in ; not only of a king, but a God, most high above all kings. With what awe and regard then should I carry it towards him ? with what humility and circumspection should I walk before him ? when so clearly he eyes me, and perfectly understands me ; and quite to the bottom, knows all, even the very worst of me. O blessed be my God, that will hide his face from those sins, which yet he cannot choose but see : that will not see them, to charge me with them, though he cannot avoid the sight to be aware of them.

But, O the foolishness of blinded sinners, that think the all-seeing LORD such a one as themselves ; yea, think themselves to know somewhat, that he does not ; and are ready to ask, (as Job xxii. 13.) " How does God know ? can he judge through the " dark cloud ? " Is there such knowledge in the Most High ? Is not he otherwise taken up, than to look after us, and mind every thing that we do ? Thus they reckon to escape the eyes of God, because they have left off to set God before their own eyes : and then presume to do that before Him, which, if but a child were by, they would forbear. O how little do they know or consider, with what a glorious Majesty they make so bold ; and how great and tremendous is the judge, whom they so set at naught !

O my soul, use the discerning, which God has given thee, to better purpose ; and so affect thyself
with

with his continual nearness to thee, and inspection of thee, that thou mayest order thy conversation with the greatest circumspection; and keep thy very heart with all diligence, because none of thy secrets are any secret to him, before whose eyes all things are naked and open. To what purpose is it, to carry off all fair to the world abroad, when God knows all to be rotten and naught within! Is it from the world or from the Lord, that I look for my reward? Is it to man, or to God, that I am most concerned to approve myself? And can I engage in any mystery of iniquity, that shall be in the dark to him; or do the wicked thing, that he shall not find out? Does not he see my ways, and count all my steps? O think of this, and when the tempter is urgent with thee, to sin against God, tell him, thou wilt yield to him, when he can convey thee any where, where the Lord shall not see thee. Bid unclean thoughts be gone, for the holy God is there. Afright away all ugly lusts and passions, with this one thought, he that must give me my doom, now has me in his eye. O what antidote so strong against the contagion of sin? And what such sure phylactery to keep me within the bounds of my duty? When I carry myself, (like as Tertullian says the Christians of his time did; *Ut apud certos de Dei conspectu*;) as one that is certain God sees all I do, and how it is done: dealing in public with men, as knowing that the Lord observes me: and in private with the Lord, as if all the men in the world spied and overheard me.

And though the remembrance of God be so grievous to ill men, that can never be merry or easy, till they have fancied him far enough away from them; nor endure the presence, that curbs their extravagance, confounds their filthiness, and cramps their jollities: here shew thy eagle eye, my soul, to look upon the sun; and let it be none of thy grievance,

vance, but thy joy, to have the Lord thy God so nigh to thee, and ever present with thee : to find thyself encircled with the beams of the eternal Delity, and to bless thy eyes, in perpetually waiting upon his, as it were, in the very presence-chamber of the King of heaven : in time of trouble, to have the Lord of hosts with thee, the God of Jacob for thy refuge : under flanders, to have the witness of thy integrity, to receive thy appeals : and in prosperous days, to have all gilded and adorned with the light of God's countenance : and at all times, to know where presently to find him, and address to him, and speak with him : and to be sure, that every word is observed by him, and not so much as thy groaning hid from him. O my soul, is not here the heaven upon earth ? And to enter into it, and keep thy possession of it, carry it with such filial care, and dutiful respect, to thy Father in heaven, who sees in secret, that thou mayest not only be encompassed with the common influence of his universal presence ; but blest and revived with the heavenly beams of that gracious presence and favour, in which is all thy life and joy, both here and for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“ O LORD, the omniscient God ! before whom all
 “ things are naked and open ; and from whom
 “ no thought can be withholden : but even the secret-
 “ est motions of my mind are better known to thee,
 “ than to myself. For O, how many things pass within
 “ me, which escape my notice and regard ? Where-
 “ as nothing is out of thy eye and observation ; who
 “ canst not choose but see through me, and all that
 “ is within me, and the whole that concerns me.
 “ O keep me ever mindful of thy all-seeing eye be-
 “ ing intent upon me : and so affect me with thy
 “ continual

“ continual nearness to me, and thy narrow inspection of me ; how thou art, wherever I am, and conscious and privy to whatever I do ; that I may order my conversation with the greatest circumspection, and keep my very heart with all diligence, to approve myself pleasing in thy sight, through Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION V.

Of God, as our chief good.

THERE are none in the world, but do desire and love that which is good ; or at least, that which appears to them as such. Every one is for that, which he takes to be good for him. But, alas ! my soul, how many do mistake evil for good ? or take up with some inferior goods, far short of the supreme ? as if they had found out somewhat better than God himself. 'Tis that, however, which pleases them better : that, for the sake of which, they think meanly of him, and postpone him ; as if he had not so much worth, and goodness, and invitation in him, but they could mend their markets, and do better without him. And canst thou not remember the time, my soul, when I have been entangled with the like temptation ? when nothing would serve my turn, but such a creature, for which, I could have been content to part even with the blessed Maker ? and it carried such charms, to dazzle my eyes, and inveigle my heart, that I bound up my soul, and my bliss in it ; and thought, if I might but freely enjoy that creature, I should be in heaven, and need seek no further. But this my way, O ! was it not my shameful folly, as well
as

as my hateful impiety and idolatry? How was I then bewildered and lost, and ran away, (with the prodigal,) out of my father's house, to feed upon the swines husks! I see the cheat: I am so far come to myself, as to be sensible of the madness. And blessed be the God, who has opened my eyes, to make the discovery, and now brought me to look upon him as all; and the most promising fruitions out of him, as nothing. For what is there but God, originally, and perfectly, and eternally good? Every other good, even the best, is but derivative, and borrowed from him, and has but some small drops and crumbs of the infinite goodness, that is in him, and holds that little at mere courtesy, only as long as it pleases him. This world's good, dressed up in its pomp, makes such a figure in carnal eyes, that it is courted as the only good: when, alas! all lies in the dress, and there is little or nothing in it, beyond that appearance: nothing at all connatural to the heavenly soul: nothing that it can feed upon, or satisfy itself in: and the worldly portion also is still in a consumption; and that small good, which the broken cisterns have in them, will soon leak out, and all be dried up. Only he, that has scattered among the creatures some sprinklings, possesses in himself, the fulness, the perfection, and eternity of good. He cannot make the creature, that is better than himself. Nay the whole creature good put together, comes infinitely short of the eternal goodness that is in God blessed for ever. O let me have him, and I have enough, though I have nothing else: but let me have all else without him, and I have nothing: nothing that will stand me in stead, to do me any real good. I may soon see to the bottom of all, that ever creatures can do for me. But the goodness of God is an unfathomable depth, never to be exhausted. It cherishes all the creatures at present, and it will satisfy and make happy.

happy all his people for ever. O how much of this ever-overflowing goodness, runs out even upon the despisers of it! how many live upon it, that give him small thanks for it! yea, that rebel against him in the very use and strength of it! for he is good even to the evil; and all do fare the better for him. But he is the saving and soul-satiating good of his chosen; who will be for ever blessed in the enjoyment of him.

See then here, my soul, how to direct thy choice; and of all the sorts of good, which to fix upon, and to acquiesce in. Wouldst thou have shadows or substance? polluted puddles, or the fountain of living waters? Is not the All-sufficient enough for thee? wouldst thou have more than all? when having this good, every good else shall be to thee for good: nay, he will make even evil things work together for thy good. Now put the case thus to thyself; either God is a complete happiness to my satisfaction, or he is not: if he is not, then he is not God: and why should I seek and serve him? But if he be so full and absolute; would I have any thing beyond perfect and eternal bliss? O that I may not lie short of it; but get up to the fountain-head: and there quench all the wisest and biggest of my desires! O my soul, be friends with thy own happiness. Away with all thy disparaging thoughts of it: see where it lies, and long for it, and pant after it. If thou art indeed for happiness, do not take up with such a desire, as is but a bare would be: but pursue it in earnest: and leave all, for that which is worth infinitely more than all besides. Take not a false aim at blessedness; to do worst of all for thyself, when thou thinkest of doing the best. O seek not the living among the dead: never think to be happy in the fictitious poultry goods here; which will sooner abuse and spoil thee, than ever fill and content thee. Look through them, and beyond them all: and put on here a generous pride,
and

and indulge to the aspiring humour. Where necessity is in the case, to stimulate; and thou must have all, or thou wilt lose all; O be happy in the chief good, that thou mayest not be miserable for ever. For, if thou mis of this, thou wilt be undone, notwithstanding all that any other goods can do for thee. O look upon all seeming good then but as real evil, that would divorce and pull thee from thy good supreme. And fall in with no other goods, any further than they may serve as ladders to raise thee up to the top of all thy wishes, in the enjoyment of that highest good, which is the only good that can quiet thee, and stay by thee, to answer every desire, and to do thee good for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** LORD, my God! thou art infinitely good;
 “ yea, thou art very goodness and love. All
 “ good is derived from thee, and no good will do
 “ us any good without thee: nor does any thing
 “ deserve to be called good at all, compared and
 “ set in competition with thee. O give me such
 “ convictions of the empty and transitory condition of all the creatures, which would entangle
 “ my affections: and also make such ravishing discoveries of thyself, in thy infinite fulness and
 “ goodness to my soul, that I may not dote on any
 “ the vain perishing trifles of this present time;
 “ but may leave all for thee, and fix my heart upon
 “ thee, my God, and set up my rest in that substantial, permanent good: and dig for the true
 “ treasure: which alone is soul-filling, and everlasting. Amen.”

MEDITATION VI.

Of the Trinity.

THAT there is but one living and true God, is the voice of nature, as well as of scripture. And never abide that doctrine, my soul, which would destroy the Unity of the Deity, and goes about to establish a plurality of gods. For I am sure it must be the most foul and wicked absurdity to hold, that there is any other God, but the FATHER Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. The Socinian tenet then, that would make Christ another God, different from the Father, to be worshipped with divine adoration, how canst thou, my soul, but reject and detest? because it sets up more gods than one. Yet am I as sure, that the one God, in holy scripture, is represented under three relations, or three ways of subsistence: which, (because each is an intellectual essence,) are called divine, infinite persons; distinct, though not separate, from one another. And, 1 John v. 7. "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one," obliges me as much to believe the three, as the one. And they that cavil at the creeds, may as well make their outcries at the text. Nay, of this positive assertion, there was even a sensible demonstration, Matt. iii. 16, 17. when our Lord Jesus had the Spirit of God, like a dove, descending, and lighting upon him: and the voice of God from heaven declaring, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

So

So the form of baptism, whereby I was initiated, and entered into the church, according to our blessed Saviour's own express order, Matt. xxviii. 19. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," devotes me to the service of all three, and to one as much as another. Thus also that form of blessing, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. in the three great Names, makes each by himself, the fountain whence it comes. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen." And the plain assertion of "Jesus Christ's being over all, God blessed for ever," Rom. ix. 5. and that all men should "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," John v. 23. makes him, in particular, the object of divine adoration, to be worshipped, as my Lord and my God. And not only the name of God, Acts v. 4. but the attributes and works of God, being also ascribed to the Holy Ghost; (Psal. cxxxix. 7. John xiv. 26. 1 Cor. iii. 16. and chap. xii. 11. 2 Pet. i. 21. Job xxxiii. 4.) confirms me in it, that he is no less than God the Holy Ghost. In whom therefore I must believe, and to whom I must offer up my prayers, and all my services, and myself. Thus far then I am not only safe, but bound to worship the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; each as God, and Lord: and, (as in the Gloria Patri, &c.) to give glory to them equally. And therefore I am certain, they must all three be but one and the same God, under distinct considerations. And when I call upon this, or that, or the next, I do not mean another god. Though I vary the style, I do not change the Deity: but still it is the same most high, and holy, and only One, whom I confide in, and fall down before, and call, and wait, and rely upon.

But then, that which puzzles thee, my soul, to conceive, is, how three should be one, and one should be three: that each should be God, and yet but

but one God. And hence come all the tragical exclamations of absurdity, in the doctrine of the blessed Trinity. And proud dictators, in such things as are above their reach, will take upon them to make the positive conclusion, that can never be, which they are at a loss to conceive how it should be. Though God's word says it is, they cry, 'tis not possible, because above their comprehension. And, if they will believe no more than they can comprehend, they may, in time, think it not convenient, to believe there is any God at all : because they are not able to conceive the manner of his being. But they that are so much out, and frequently baffled, even in common things about them, O how arrogantly do they assume to themselves an infallibility of judgment in the great things so far above them ! Indeed I must believe neither God, nor soul, if I must believe nothing without a perfect knowledge, that enables me to solve all difficulties. Though I will here believe no more than God reveals, nor any thing which contradicts the certain knowledge, which God has given me, yet I will believe it, because God has said it, when I can know it no further than he is pleased to reveal it. My reason then shall truckle to scripture, in matters that are above my reason. Nor will I gainsay all that I cannot thoroughly understand ; but submit and acquiesce, unless I knew it impossible to be true. And concerning God, my soul, sure God himself is best able to inform me. For " the things of God " knows no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 11. And the account that he gives, how shall I confute, unless I were sure of the contrary ? which I can never be, when I am no better acquainted with that infinite Being, which, at best, I can know but in part, and see now darkly as in a glass. There's still abundantly more in it than I can reach. And indeed the whole of human knowledge is far from being adequate to it, or a match for it.

Though

Though I will not then interpret scripture, so as to confute all my senses, when duly exercised about their proper objects; but I would be allowed sufficient, to distinguish such things as bread and wine, from flesh and blood, however some (from the latter, this my body,) would tie me up to believe a substantial change, where I do see, and feel, and taste, and plainly perceive the contrary: yet the glorious Deity is so far from being an object of my sense, that it out-matches my reason; and has unknown profundities in it, which no man in the world can fathom. Therefore I take it, as God is pleased to give it, and will not seek to be wise above his Word, but make that the model of my faith. Yet this belief of the Trinity does not oblige me to all the words of art, and all the modes of representation, used by every assertor. No, here I will content myself with what God himself has told me. Nevertheless, I cannot wonder, if men do labour for fit expressions of that, which has no resemblance in nature. And their weakness or mistakes in describing the manner, shall never shake my belief of the thing. For I dare trust the veracity of God, revealing it: though I cannot depend upon the ingenuity of some men expounding it.

Yea, my soul, does not the whole of my religion (as I am a Christian,) hang upon this belief of the Trinity? when as all my salvation was transacted by it: the Father sending the Son to redeem the world; and the Son sending the Spirit to make application of the redemption. And though I reverence the mystery, which I own my insufficiency to deal with; yet I will not look upon it as a nicety, to puzzle our heads; but as God's kind revelation, to endear himself, and win our hearts; to make us more sensible of our misery, and the difficulty of our recovery, when needing such a remedy, as the only Son of God sent to be the Saviour of the world.

world. And from the wonders of such love and mercy, to raise us to the highest veneration, affection, gratitude, and all possible returns of chearful duty, to our glorious Deliverer, our gracious Father, our dear Redeemer, and blessed Comforter : unto whom be all glory, now and eternally.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** Holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God ! Have mercy upon me miserable sinner. Forgive me all my mistaken notions, and unworthy apprehensions of the divine, eternal Majesty. And where I cannot conceive as I ought of the triune God most high, nor reach to any thought worthy of my heavenly Lord, O pity my frailty, and guide me in the profound mystery, that I may not think of thee, so as to provoke thee ; nor seek after God only to gratify my curiosity : but in order to the bettering of my worship and duty, and the promoting of my faith and comfort, in the Father of my Lord, in the Redeemer of my soul, and the Comforter of my heart, which are the three great names, and personal distinctions of the one true God, that lives and reigns over all, world without end. Amen.”

MEDITATION VII.

Of the Godhead of Christ.

THAT JESUS CHRIST is the true God, maker of the world, and over all, God blessed for ever ; O my soul, what is more expressly asserted in holy scripture ? and if this (as some will have it) be only
a great

a great compliment, bestowed upon him ; then must I say, (what I would not say for all the world,) that the gospel is only a great fallacy put upon us, when it obliges us to worship a titular Deity with divine adoration, as we do honour the Father Almighty and everlasting : and to believe in him, for our Saviour, who, if he be not very God, can never answer that character : for it cost more to redeem our souls, than can be paid or done by any creature. We have business for a Saviour to do, which none but the Almighty can ever effect. And I thought it had been he, that should have redeemed Israel ; and that with an eternal redemption. But he who can effect that glorious work, must be the Lord of all Lords : for in such a Lord alone, “ shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory,” Isa. xlv. 25. His name must be called, “ Wonderful, “ and the mighty God,” chap. ix. 6. Nor are these only pompous titles ; but he that wears them, every way deserves them, and counts it no robbery, to be equal with God, being indeed one and the same God with the Father, “ In whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” Col. ii. 9. Not only some qualities of the divine nature communicated to him ; but the whole divine essence residing in him : and that really and substantially, more than a shadow and a figure : even so vitally united with his manhood, as to make up the one glorious person Christ Jesus.

And therefore, my soul, do thou magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoice in God my Saviour ; rejoice that I have such a Saviour, who is God mighty to save, even to the uttermost : and doubt not to say to him with Thomas, my Lord, and my God ! Yea, what time thou art afraid, trust in him : and when this doubt arises in thy mind, what hope, that infinite justice and purity should ever take the criminal and guilty into the embraces of mercy ! Here see the ground of hope, that he who is very
God,

God, became the surety, to take the matter upon himself: And not only to intreat, but to deserve the highest favour and salvation for the sinner. That thy Mediator is God as well as man, to personate both, and secure the interests of both: To give satisfaction to the holy just God, in fulfilling all righteousness; and also to give the most comfortable relief to miserable sinners, by such a worthy and sufficient atonement, made on their behalf, wherein God has declared himself well pleased.

And that the offended Majesty would be pleased to satisfy himself, out of his own treasures, (where it could no way else ever be done) that his own wisdom and goodness would intercede, and prevail with himself, to forgive and be kind, when justice called for punishment: this doing it for his own sake shall make me so far from disputing the payment, or disowning the free grace, that I will look upon the favour as so much the higher, and the obligation as so much the stronger: when God would lay the design himself, and not withhold his Son, coequal with himself, who shared with him in his glory, "before the world was," John xvii. 5. And he that made all things, must needs be before them; and if before them; then from everlasting. For who could give beginning to God Almighty? and yet, who that were less, could be the maker of heaven and earth?

I will believe my Lord Jesus then to be, what he calls himself, Rev. i. 11. "Alpha and Omega, the first and the last:" and "greater than the temple," Matt. xii. 6. Because he had the Godhead personally united to his human nature, and not only for a while resident in him, like the temple, that was a type of him. Therefore I observe, that when the Jews accused him, for making himself God, John x. 33. He did not deny the charge; (as certainly he would have done, for God's sake, and for
ours;

ours ; if he had been but a man, he would not have set up himself a rival in his Father's throne ; nor an idol to ensnare and ruin, instead of saving our souls :) but he only retorts upon them for calling them gods, whom they knew to be but men : and at the same time denying his Deity ; who did the works which none but God himself could accomplish. And indeed, my soul, where were the wonderful condescension, and such mighty humbling of himself, to be made in the likeness of men, if he had not been God, before he was man ? As God therefore, I admire, and adore, and bless him ; that he would so strangely stoop, to take our nature upon him, to catch hold of it, as sinking into ruin, and unite it to his own, never to be parted ; but above all the angels in heaven to be for ever glorified. And O what too great now for me to expect from such a Redeemer ! let my needs be never so pressing, and my dangers never so threatening, cannot he supply me, and secure me ? is any thing too hard for God ? I know whom I have believed, and the pardon of all my sins, the whole justification of my person, and the eternal salvation of my soul ; how easily by him can they be effected : To him therefore I look ; on him alone I depend, and in him I will still believe, to the saving of the soul.

T H E P R A Y E R.

“ **O** Blessed Jesus, I look to thee, I trust in thee,
 “ and depend upon thee, as my Lord and
 “ my God : thou art so the only-begotten of the
 “ Father, that, like thee, there is no other ; and
 “ so related to him, as to be equal with him. Have
 “ mercy upon me, O thou Son of God, as well as
 “ the Son of David ! Yea, thou that art very God,
 “ able to the uttermost to save me, by virtue of thy
 Vol. I. F “ eternal

“ eternal Deity and power almighty, make thy
 “ great salvation effectual to me. O help me, Lord,
 “ both as thy creature, and thy redeemed, to be-
 “ lieve in thee, and give up myself to thee ; to fol-
 “ low and serve thee, to love and please, to honour
 “ and glorify thee, as long as I have my being.
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION VIII.

Of the Incarnation of our blessed Saviour.

THOUGH some now begin to make it a contro-
 versy, whether there be any mystery in Chris-
 tianity, yet a more authentic writer has assured
 thee, O my soul, “ without controversy, great is
 “ this mystery, God manifested in the flesh,” 1
 Tim. iii. 16. And that the Word should be made flesh ;
 the Son of God become the Son of man ; and he
 that made the world, be made of a woman : that she
 should receive him, whom the heaven of heavens can-
 not contain, and bring him forth, as a new-born in-
 fant, who was from everlasting : that he should be
 born, who beareth all things ; the Creator be humbled
 into a creature ; he that was before Abraham, come
 into the world two thousand years after Abraham ;
 David’s Lord to be made of David’s seed ; and he
 brought lower than the angels, who is over all,
 blessed for ever : if there be nothing abstruse and
 profound in all this, then what is strange and un-
 accountable in the world ? and where is that depth,
 in which the elephant may swim, and the wisest di-
 ver find no bottom ? he that over-shadowed the
 virgin Mary, has also cast a shadow over this mys-
 tery ;

tery ; that where we wonder at it, yet we cannot see through it. Our Redeemer's name is wonderful, and who shall declare his generation ? it is true, God in whom we all live, and move, and are, is not far from every one of us ; but in Christ Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, so as never else in any creature. And he that counts it no robbery to be equal with God, has taken part of our flesh and blood ; and was " in all things made like to his brethren," Heb. ii. 14, 17. He came and pitched his tabernacle in our nature, and dwelt among us, taking even frail dust and ashes into an inseparable unity with the everlasting Deity. And so that which is most admirable in itself, proves most comfortable unto us ; and we may look upon it, not so much to astonish, as to refresh us ; seeing he is gone as far to cleanse us, as ever Adam did to defile us ; and was conceived of the Holy Ghost, to provide a remedy for the pollution of our sinful conception. Here (to allude to that in Psal. lxxxv. 10, 11.) " Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." For God is satisfied in his Son, and for his sake reconciled to my soul. And this truth springing out of the earth, righteousness has looked down from heaven. Christ, the true vine, growing out of his virgin mother, produces fruits to glad the heart of God and man. In his body prepared for him he has wrought the wonders of redemption for us : and " to us the child was born ; to us the Son was " given," Isa. ix. 6. And to whom was this errand, but to poor lost sinners ?

Here then, my soul, understand the kindness of thy friend, coming to thee upon so strange a visit, and gather up these acts and monuments of the Lord Christ, as negotiating on thy behalf. Consider him shut up in the confinement of the womb, to keep thee from the prison of hell? brought forth
into

into the light of this world, to bring thee into the glory of the next; made lower than the angels, to exalt my nature above them; not ashamed to call us brethren, that the Most High might not disdain to be called our Father.

Rejoice, O daughter of heaven; for behold thy King comes to thee. A King that is able; and thy King that is willing to do for thee. Kings do not use to visit and wait on their subjects: no, these think themselves kindly used, when but admitted to wait upon them. But the King of kings bows his heavens, and comes down to us, to be our EM-MANUEL, God with us, that we might not be afraid of one so like to us. And he comes, as the gladdest messenger, with pardon to the condemned; and brings the sweetest news of salvation to them ready to perish. Now, if Abraham rejoiced to see his day afar off, and angels desire to look into his transactions, though not immediately relating to themselves, O how mayest thou rejoice, my soul, to see that come and done which more concerns thee than all things else in the world? That the Lord of love has so remembered thee in thy low estate, and taken the way to raise thee to the highest glory; to bring the God that was fallen out with thee for thy sin, to look sweet upon thee in his Son? and how God could overlook the unworthiness of his offending creatures, thou seest by his assuming their nature. And God in my very nature, O how sweetly is it suited to the particular exigence of such a sinner! 'Tis I, saith our blessed Saviour, be not afraid: I that came down among men, not in fire and burnings, to fear and confound them; but clothed in the garments of their own flesh, to endear myself to them: look unto me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. Come to me, and believe in me, that ye may never perish, but have everlasting life. And whither else wilt thou seek, my soul?

nor

nor hast thou far to seek, when he that is so mighty to save thee, is come so nigh to thee, and made even one with thee. O be thou also one with him, by thy faith and love, as he is become one with thee by such condescension and grace. Let Christ dwell in thy heart, and yield up thyself to thy beloved; that thou mayest indeed be his, as he has given himself to be thine. Yea, that Christ in thee may be thy hope of thy glory; and nothing in the world may be able to separate thee from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE PRAYER.

“ O My LORD! how amazing has been thy con-
“ descension, not only to come to us, but to
“ be made even as one of us; and clothed in our
“ flesh, that thou mightest offer thyself a sacrifice
“ for our sins! O EMMANUEL, God with us!
“ unspeakable is thy grace and love expressed upon
“ us. O be pleased, dear Lord, to come yet further
“ than into my nature, even into my very heart,
“ and unite thyself with my soul, that I may be
“ one with thee, and not only live by thee, but in
“ thee: and of thy fulness may receive life abun-
“ dantly, and grace sufficient for me: so that thou
“ mayest not be ashamed to own me, but trans-
“ form me still more and more into thy holy like-
“ ness, till thou hast translated me into thy hea-
“ venly kingdom. Amen.”

M E D I T A T I O N IX.

Of Redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ.

O My soul, the greatest gift that ever God gave, and the kindest token that ever he sent into the world, was when he gave his Son, and by him sent redemption to his people. When we were shut up under the sin and death which we brought upon ourselves, and by the justice of heaven given over to the jailor, and executioner of vengeance, then did our Lord Redeemer come in mercy, to set us at large by paying the ransom, and price of our redemption. And because death was the wages of our sins, therefore he that would undertake for our souls, must die in our stead: Yea, and undergo such a death as was equivalent to the misery that we deserved to lie under eternally. And O! who was sufficient for this, but he that was eternal, and of infinite excellency? to make him able to emerge out of the suffering, and also to make that which he suffered infinitely deserving.

Now here, my soul, see and admire the kindness and love of God thy Saviour, that would shed his precious blood to be the propitiation for thy sins. And thou art a sharer in such his love, if thou art a member of his church. For the "church of God he "purchased with his own blood," Acts xx. 28 And now suppose a man so deep in debt, he has no ability or prospect to get out: and that he be also a great offender as well as debtor: (for the heavy reckoning too commonly grows upon the wicked living and extravagant spending:) and suppose him guilty not
only

only of trespass but treason, and so to have forfeited his life for his crimes, as well as his liberty for his debts : in this rueful case should a stranger come and pay off all his scores, and by dying rescue him from the deserved death, O what an amazing pity and bounty would be here ; enough not only to baffle the expression, but the belief of such a poor wretched creature ! And is not this thy own very case, my soul, who art as deep a debtor to God, and as heinous an offender against him ? When his blessed Son, a stranger to us, (for the world knew him not) came to make a voluntary oblation of himself for thee, so bankrupt and undone a sinner, debtor, and such a miserable creature. A slave of sin thou wast ; and under that captivity at the devil's mercy, to enslave thy understanding, and make thee restive in thy own erroneous opinion, and to enslave thy will, and make thee push on after thy own heart's lust, scorning all counsel and warning. And O ! what in the mines or galley is comparable to this slavery ! when the very heart and will are tied and bound : and the iron enters even into the soul ; and there is not so much as a wish or groan for deliverance. And O ! how deep wast thou in arrears to the justice of God ! owing more than ten thousand talents for all thy innumerable and unmeasurable sins ; and yet not able to make payment for any one, even of the least. Then hereupon ensues thy misery, to throw thee below a dog or a worm ; and to make thee envy the case of either : yea, to wish thyself a snake or a toad, rather than that wicked, cursed, damned wretch, that must bear the brunt of all God's wrath for ever. And this is thy case as a sinner, till got upon safer and better terms, in the hands of a Redeemer, so that thou must understand what is hell and damnation, before thou canst tell how to put a due rate upon his love and redemption ; who comes not only to proclaim, but
bring

bring liberty to such captives, to throw open prison-doors, and begin the great year of jubilee, to seal general releases and acquittances for all debts and demands; and universal indemnity and oblivion for all faults and offences. And such were the good tidings of great joy which the angel (at our Lord's birth) published to all people, Luke ii. 10. that none might conclude himself left out of the act of grace which brings salvation; but only such as neglect so great salvation; and wilfully refuse the ransom, and will not accept of deliverance; nor be happy, because first they must be holy. And so they die not so much in Adam, of the disease which Christ came to heal, as of their own contempt and obstinacy, because they would not be healed.

My soul, I have nothing to do to judge them, among whom Christ is not named. I will not pronounce upon them, nor limit the Holy One from conveying any benefit of redemption to them, in a way beyond my knowledge; my concern is, to secure my own share in it, and to help all else, whom I can influence to make sure of it. For to us is the word of this salvation sent, and if we be not the better, we shall be the worse for it. If we run on in all presumption, because of the mighty redemption, it will not only prove a promising harvest without any fruit, but a dreadful story of destructive consequence to us; and make us wish, that we had never heard of the gracious proposals, rather than so to reject and abuse them, to aggravate our own condemnation.

O then, my soul, instead of desiring the Redeemer to depart from thee, and let thee alone; yield up thyself to him, that has not only made thee, but bought thee, nor only brought thee out of nothing, but redeemed thee out of a miserable being. Beseech him to take thee into his blessed hands, and still more and more to redeem thee from thy sins,
and

and to carry on the work of his grace successfully upon thy heart. That thou mayest feel at home the efficacy of that redemption, which thou hearest talk of abroad. And as the sick man healed rejoices in his recovery, so finding health restored to thyself, thou mayest heartily concur with the redeemed of the Lord, to bless the Lord God of Israel, for so visiting and redeeming his people.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**O remember us, not only in our low, but
“ our lost estate, and pay our scores, and take
“ upon thee even our sins; well may thy redeemed,
“ O Lord, say, that thy goodness is boundless, and
“ thy mercy endures for ever. How much more
“ is it, than temporal lives from the hand of the
“ grave, even immortal souls, that thou hast re-
“ deemed from the pit of hell! O my great Sa-
“ viour, and mighty Deliverer! thou hast thrown
“ open the jail-doors: But, alas! I have not the wit,
“ nor the will, nor the strength to go forth; unless
“ thou redeem me from myself, as well as lay down
“ the ransom for my discharge. O crown thy own
“ gracious work, Lord! and release thy poor cap-
“ tive out of my own hands, as well as from my
“ other foes. Make me willing to be redeemed by
“ thee; and so break asunder all the cords which
“ withhold me from thee; that I may indeed re-
“ joice in the eternal redemption, which thou hast
“ wrought for me. Amen.”

MEDITATION X.

Of Christ crucified.

O My soul, how tragical and affecting is the history of our blessed Saviour's crucifixion, recorded in all the evangelists; as to the antecedents, concomitants, and consequences of it! that he who deserved best of the world, should fare the worst from it: that there should be such a combination even of all, (with cruelty and spight) to hurry him out of it; and not content to rid the world of him as a public enemy, who was the kindest friend that ever it had; but to follow him with their base carriage, and injuries and affronts to the very last, and put him to all the shame and extremity they could in his exit. O how black, how dismal is the scene, and how keen and heart-piercing is the dolorous consideration!

But my soul, do not thou rest in the history, but dive into the mystery of Christ crucified. For, be sure, there is somewhat extraordinary in it: and therefore make a serious search, and thorough inquiry after it. As upon the sight of a common execution, when any criminal goes off, the inquiry uses to be made, what is it for? what has he done, that he comes to this end? so here be curious to find out the meaning of this suffering, "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? Wherefore art thou red in thy apparel? and thy garments like him that treadeth the wine fat," Isa. lxiii. 1, 2. How comes it to pass; and what was the matter? that a person of the purest innocence

nocence, and the highest excellence should be so persecuted and tormented, as if he had been the vilest creature, and the most intolerable malefactor? thou mayest assure thyself, my soul, it could not be without the will of God. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief," Isa. liii. 10. For his enemies could have "no power at all against him, if not given to them from above," John xix. 11. But he was delivered by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," Acts ii. 23. Tho' by wicked hands he was crucified and slain. God was holy in suffering them to act so wickedly, as knowing how to bring good out of their evil; and to make even the greatest abomination, subservient to the world's salvation.

But the procuring cause of his death, what was it but the same, by which death first entered into the world? for his soul was made an offering for sin, Isa. liii. 10. He was "wounded and bruised for transgressions and iniquities," ver. 5. but none of his own. No, it was for ours. He bore the "sin of many," ver. 12. "Bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows," ver. 4. Tho' he did no sin, yet he bore ours in his own body on the tree; that we "might be healed through his stripes," 1 Pet. ii. 22, 24. And so thou seest, my soul, not only what brought it upon him; his own love to put himself in the sinner's stead; but also what was designed by him, even the sinner's salvation, wrought and purchased by his satisfaction. For he was "delivered up for our offences," Rom. iv. 25. He came to give "his life a ransom for many," Matt. xx. 28. And was "slain, to redeem us to God by his blood," Rev. v. 9. And has made "our peace, through the blood of his cross," Col. i. 20. And "put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself," Heb. ix. 26. And the "blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God, cleanses us from all sin," 1 John i. 7.

Thus

Thus runs the whole stream of the gospel, carrying before it this great and precious truth, that the intention of Christ's crucifixion, was for satisfaction that the justice of Heaven might be contented; and that his people in danger of it might be acquitted. What means then the Socinian struggle, to prove, that the death of Christ our Lord was only exemplary, for ratification of what he taught; to seal his doctrine with his blood? if wretched creatures will be at so much pains to dispute themselves, not only out of the truth of the gospel, but out of the sweetest comfort of mind, and the strongest hope of heaven: yet, my soul, do thou understand thy own need and interest; and consult thy own peace and happiness better than so. And having found the propitiation for thy sin, and a remedy for thy misery, do not part with it so easily. O look unto thy bleeding, dying Saviour, as all thy hope and thy life. For as there thou mayest see the justice of Heaven to terrify thee, and sin in its bloody colours to humble thee, to break thy heart for it, and to turn thy heart against it: so in thy expiring Lord, Redeemer, thou mayest see a love stronger than death, because the most cruel death could not quench or cool it; but he would express the greatest of all love, in laying down his life; and that not for his friends, but his enemies. For "when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son," Rom. v. 20. And there mayest thou also see a cordial, and reviving for thyself, when drooping under the sense of thy sins, and the dread of God's wrath. For, O what maladies cannot be cured by that all-healing blood? and what sins so deadly, that his meritorious death cannot discharge thee from? The Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world; and to "redeem us from the curse of the law, himself was made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. Heavy matters thou knowest might be laid to thy charge; but he has
" taken

“ taken away the hand writing that was against thee, “ nailing it to his cross,” Col. ii. 14. Go then, my soul, and take shelter from all danger, under the shadow of thy crucified Saviour : that the destroying angel may pass over thy doors sprinkled with his blood, and through faith in that blood thou mayest be justified and reconciled unto God ; and having received the atonement, mayest joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here then is a bitter-sweet consideration for thee, my soul. Bitter, that there should be no sorrows like to the sorrows of thy dear Lord Jesus ; and that thou shouldest have thy sad share in procuring those sorrows to him. O lay it to heart, and bewail it in his sight. And be so crucified with him to the world, and to thy lusts that thou mayest never (by returning to folly, and working iniquity) crucify the Son of God afresh. But O how sweet is the thought, that he should look upon thee in thy blood, to redeem thee with his own blood ! how mayest thou cheer up, and take heart and glory in the cross of Christ ? and there lay up thy rest, and let it be all thy trust. By it abide, for all thy pardon and peace with God ; to it hold fast in life and death ; and unto him that has loved thee, and redeemed thee, and washed thee from thy sins in his own blood ; give glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** Lord, the Lamb of God, who wast slain to
 “ take away the sins of the world ! I arraign
 “ and condemn myself, as guilty of blood, and ac-
 “ cessary to thy cruel death : because I have had so
 “ large a share in that sin, which was its procuring
 “ cause. But thy precious blood cleanses from all sin,
 “ even from that which shed it. And what guilt so
 “ foul that it cannot atone for ? O what stains so
 “ deep

“ deep that it cannot fetch out? my Saviour, let
 “ me, who do extremely need it, find the blessed
 “ benefit of it, so to be cleansed by it. And may
 “ that death of the Son of God, which reconciles
 “ enemies unto him, redeem me from the curse;
 “ and make my peace, and revive my drooping
 “ soul, and warm my heart with love to my dying
 “ Lord; that I may never forget the strangest kind-
 “ nefs of my greatest friend, and dearest lover; but
 “ resent it with all admiration and gratitude for e-
 “ vermore. Amen.”

MEDITATION XI.

Of the Blessed Spirit's Inhabitation.

THAT all true believers, the living members of
 Christ, are endued with the Spirit of God, so
 as to be the temple of the Holy Ghost, I have assur-
 ance, my soul, from Rom. viii. 9. and 1 Cor. iii.
 16. yea, what is this more than our Lord himself
 promised, John xiv. 17. Though the world cannot
 receive the Spirit of truth, because it sees him not,
 nor knows him; yet ye know him, for he dwelleth
 with you, and shall be in you. Now this is true, not
 only of the faithful collectively, as conjoined in a
 mystical body, like so many stones to make up the
 same building; but also distributively, of every be-
 liever in particular, 1 Cor. vi. 19. “ Your body is
 “ the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you.”

He that had first the ark, then the tabernacle, and
 after that the temple; now has as many houses as
 there are congregations; yea persons of believers in
 the world. And as a man dwells in his house, so a
 temple is God's dwelling house. And the Spirit
 making that to be a temple, where he inhabits, speaks
 him

him therefore to be very God; because the Christians in whom he dwells, are thereupon a spiritual temple; such a temple whose foundation is the eternal rock Jesus Christ. And the faith and virtue of his blood it is that makes them so considerable, to be thus highly favoured with the divine Guest from above: yea, not only to have his blessed Spirit for a guest, but to be made his fixed residence, where he sets up his rest, even as a man does in his dwelling house; and is even as another soul in the soul, to actuate and quicken it, and to be the very life of it, and though often for a while, he may in part withdraw, yet never totally to leave it.

And how is this temple erected my soul, but like that in the heavens, without hands? for can we set up to ourselves holy temples to the Lord? No, 'tis his own doing, who "creates us in Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 10. He is the sole founder and perfecter of the blessed work. And the saints are builded for a "habitation of God by the Spirit," ver. 22. The same Spirit of God that gave them being, gives them this new and better being; yea, and a capacity to receive his own blessed majesty.

But will God indeed, (whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain) be pleased thus to dwell with the poor children of men? O how strange is the condescension! and how sweet the consolation! As this speaks heavenly comfort, my soul, to have the great God bow his heavens, and come down to me, and the Comforter himself to dwell in me; the least of whose consolations out-weigh the biggest joys of the world, because they are comforts that enter, and root themselves in the heart, and such as will stick to a dying man, and go along with thee, my departing soul, and stay by thee, and to all eternity be still growing upon thee; so what holy duty does it teach me? and O! to what heavenly carriage does it oblige me? when these temples of the Lord are built, not only of liv-
ing

ing stones, but such as are also precious stones and his jewels, to be kept unspotted from the world, shining as lights in it, and giving a worthy example to it, but still living above it. And O! what destruction from the Lord may I dread, if I defile this spiritual temple, peculiarly consecrated to him? If I make it a den of thieves, a habitation of dragons, my body the member of a harlot, my mind the cage of unclean thoughts, my inner man the receptacle of abominable lusts, and even the portion of devils.

'Tis not enough for this temple to look well unto spectators eyes abroad, but its chief adornments must be within, to please him that looks upon the heart. And shall I harbour any thing that is an abomination to the Lord in the very place where he chuses to reside? God forbid. O let it grieve my soul, that ever I have grieved the holy in-dwelling Spirit of God. And let my repentance and prayers now do the office of a good Josiah, to purge the house of God, till pride and lust, fraud and malice, excess and wantonness, no more there be found. What! do I know that the Spirit of God dwelleth in me? O how carefully then should I take heed to myself, that I do nothing to distaste and affront the heavenly inhabitant, and not only employ my tongue as the bell of the temple, to sound his praise, but keep my heart as the *sanctum sanctorum*, where no iniquity is regarded; nothing filthy finds countenance and harbour! And shall sin reign in that body, which is the habitation of such a Majesty? Away, every cursed enemy; you shall not be reset and cherished just under his holy eye. Let who will dare to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and make this Spirit of glory the subject of their lewd sport and buffoonery; O my soul, revere and adore, bless and praise the divine glorious Inmate; and if I am God's house, that house then must be a house of prayer, where not only words but my heart must be poured out before the Lord.

And

And in his temple I must also think of his loving kindness, and speak of his glory, who inhabits the praises of Israel, and is chiefly to be praised by his redeemed, and such obliged by him as I have been. O may I see his power and glory in this sanctuary, the rays and beams of this heavenly light from above, the communications of God himself, when I set myself to draw nigh to him, and to experience the blessed enjoyment of him. May I, (through his grace) so search and cleanse the house, so watch and keep my whole man, soul and body, that the Lord may be pleased to say, "This is my house, here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein; I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

THE PRAYER.

"GREAT Lord! how unmeet am I for that honour, to be a temple of the Holy Ghost; such honour have all thy saints; and such a divine energy, and omnipotent helper, is needful, to make and accomplish thy acceptable servants. O God, the Father almighty, send the Spirit of thy Son into my heart; and let that heavenly Guest dwell and abide with me, and work and rule in me, to purge out my dross, to purify my soul, to quicken me in thy way, to enable me for thy work, to draw me from this world unto my God; and to make me rejoice and glory with the redeemed of the Lord. Amen."

MEDITATION XII.

Of God's Spirit striving with man.

O My soul, how many are the gracious methods that God is pleased to use, for the reducing and saving of poor sinners? but what so powerful application to them, as when he sends his own Son to die for them, and his own Spirit to strive with them! though the Lord said, "his Spirit should not "always strive with man," Gen. vi. 3. yet, O how long does he strive, and how hard does he plead, and how strongly reason to convince the sinner! yea by an overpowering energy, sometimes he breaks in upon him, so that he cannot but submit and yield himself overcome. And indeed there needs no less than the power from on high to convert every sinner, who is not only without ability to recover himself, but has an unhappy power to struggle against the things of his own peace.

The blessed Spirit strives by the Word, which is the "ministration of the Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 8. and by his ministers, whom he endows with gifts and abilities for the work about which he sends them. He strives by darting in beams of light among the ignorant, and by commands, and rebukes, and threats, to awe and break the rebellious: and by promises, and invitations, and beseechings, to draw in them that are otherwise engaged. He strives with us by corrections, to drive us out of our sins; and by comforts, to win us into his holy ways. In such divers manners, and by manifold impressions, is the same Spirit pleased to work all in all, and by his
grace

grace alone, my soul, it is, that I am what I am. Whatever good is wrought in me, it was by the blessed Spirit's operation upon me. And when I have so often contested with him, and done despite to him, O wonder of divine mercy, that such a Majesty should ever vouchsafe to look after me, and concern himself so much about me, to prevent my ruin, and make me for ever happy! O by what amazing condescensions, and surprising occurrences has he strove to gain me to himself, that I might be safe in such blessed hands! And what shall I have to say for myself at the final audit, my soul, when so instructed and tried, and hammered, and conducted, by the heavenly Guide, and a hand from above, if I am not thus overcome and won, and made what I should be? shall he come down to me, and I be shifting to run out of the way of his help, or apply no diligence in the use of his means? O may I better relish the things of the Spirit of God; and more readily comply with all his gracious overtures, to help me heaven-ward! May I be willing in the day of his power; and put myself forward to meet him in the way of his approaches; instead of striving against him, when he is pleased to strive with me, may I shew all gladness to accept his blessed offers, and my willingness, that he should do even what he will with me. O may I be compliant and joyful with all my heart, to be owned and disciplined by such a glorious Leader, instead of being forced to it; let it be the desire of my soul to be carried away by his heavenly attractives. O let me admire his grace, and solace my soul in his everlasting arms; and greatly please myself to be under such a blessed Convoy. Let him enter and take possession of my heart, and carry all before him, in my soul. O let me not need so much calling and spurring on to his holy entertainments, and my own happiest advantage; but may I do all heartily as to the Lord,
with

with good-will and great satisfaction in the doing. For if I have but the willing mind, he will accept me; and if I yield up myself into his gracious hands, he will never lose me.

But, my soul, remember, that there will be an end of this probation and striving; it will not last always. No, though he calls and offers, and importunes, and negotiates again and again; and will not (for my reluctance and obstinacy) throw me away presently: yet the time is coming on apace, when all these overtures will for ever cease. And therefore when I find a present application, O let me not put it off upon a future expectation; but catch hold of the opportunities which now I have; lest he teach me to my cost, that he will not bear my manners for ever, but leave me to perish, for want of that grace which I refused, and without which I cannot be saved. For if he give me up, I am lost; and how do I know which may be the last offer? O let me not then neglect or refuse ever a one, nor so venture my salvation; but know the time of my visitation, and hear his voice to-day, and let him that solicits for my heart, be received into my soul, so to sanctify me wholly, that he may also glorify me eternally.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** My GOD! I am ashamed and confounded,
 “ to think of all my ill, and unworthy, and
 “ offensive carriage towards so glorious and gracious a Lord; that after all thy kindest dealings
 “ with me, and the richest blessings heaped upon
 “ me, I have so much and so long abused thy heavenly grace, and despised thy wonderful mercy,
 “ and quenched and resisted thy blessed Spirit. O
 “ glorify the riches of thy grace, and thy ever-
 “ enduring

“enduring mercy, in delivering me from the guilt,
 “and from the power of such provoking sins, and
 “break and conquer my perverse obstinate will;
 “that I may not stand it out against such sweet en-
 “gaging methods of the Spirit of love; but let the
 “Holy Ghost with power from on high, so com-
 “mand and over-rule me, that I may be tractable
 “and yielding to every good motion; and not
 “only willing but glad to be so carried along in
 “the way pleasing to my God, through Jesus
 “Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION XIII.

Of grieving the Spirit of God.

TO vex or grieve the holy blessed Spirit, my soul, I must not take it in the letter; because the divine nature is above all molestation, and not capable of being disturbed by any passion; but it imports a great distaste, and high offence given to the Holy One; and is to be understood, as spoken (*more humano*) in accommodation to what is usual among men, when they are exasperated and touched to the quick with some foul wrong, or unkindness; they signify their resentment and grievance, in giving marks of their displeasure, turning away their face and favour from the offender, and making him to understand how sensible they are that they have been ill used, and know not how to bear it, but carry towards him that has offered the injury otherwise than formerly; to give him a smart perception, how ill he has done in making so bold with them, and trespassing so much upon them.

Thus

Thus the Lord, upon our grievous provocations, withdraws his pleased countenance, turns away his face, and casts us from his presence : yea, he frowns upon us, and reveals his wrath against us. He complains as one pressed under us, and wearied with our iniquities, Amos ii. 13. Isa. xliii. 24. When we resist or quench the Spirit, and stifle his motions to push on after our own vile inclinations, it is most offensive to him, and he takes it heinously from us. Though every offence against the Holy Ghost is not the sin pronounced unpardonable, Matt. xii. 31. For then who, alas ! would not be in that guilt, when so often we offend all ? yet may they tremble as bordering upon it, and ready to drop into it, who make it a common and light thing, to withstand the strivings of the Holy Spirit, and contract a habit of despising all that he offers, to check them in their evil ways, and their boldness to engage in forbidden things. And therefore is that sin irremissible, because it is indeed a falling from grace, and putting away repentance, and rejecting the faith of Christ, and all those means and terms upon which alone mercy and pardon may be had.

And as the Spirit of God is said to be grieved in himself, by way of allusion to human affections ; so to be grieved in his saints, by way of sympathy with their condition. When they that believe in Christ, and such as are led by the Spirit, are despitefully used ; yea, scoffed and trampled upon, upon this very account, that they are for walking in the Spirit, and do own him for their blessed Guide and Leader : he resents the affronts and indignities then, as offered to himself, and they that make themselves merry with the grace and holiness of such, what do they but blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and desperately strike at him that dwells and works in them ? and then what thanks to the profane wretches, that this blessed Spirit is not really affect-

ed

ed with sadness? when it is not for want of their doing all they can to effect it. No, the obstruction is not in their wills, but in his nature, that is above the possibility of receiving any hurt by all their malice. They persecute Christ in his members; they let fly at the temples of the Holy Ghost, and then he that beholds the mischief and spite, will take the matter into his hand, and take all the spleen and venom (disgorged by those tongues set on fire by hell) as levelled at himself, and avenge the quarrel of his holiness, upon the creatures so filthy that cannot endure or forgive any that are holy. O how may they dread to think what work they are doing, and what wages they must reckon upon receiving.

But, my soul, let me call myself to a strict account for all my ill carriage towards this good Spirit; that when he has strove with me, I have strove against him; that when he has offered me the greatest kindness, I have unkindly and ungodlily put him off, that so many holy motions I have slighted, and so many gracious overtures I have resisted. O what judgment do I deserve without mercy, for so withstanding my own mercy! what have I done? to affront the greatest power, and to abuse the dearest friend! here if terror will not awe and break me, yet let ingenuity dissolve and melt me into a penitent concern, and godly sorrow, that I have so distasted and affronted my only Comforter. O how do his endearments and my engagements aggravate the wrong, and make my sin exceeding sinful! O may I not carry it on, till I have sinned unpardonably. But for this let me weep, and "my eye run down with water, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me," Lam. i. 16. Yea, that I have put him away, and would not that he should abide with me, nor rule over me. O let me never be quiet, nor at peace with myself,
till

till I have recovered his lost favour. Let me do all that I am able to invite, and welcome, and please the blessed Guest; and give him such a habitation with me, whereof he may not be weary; that he may relish my actions, and approve of my ways. And while the common concern of most is, what will men say? what will my neighbours think, of this or that, which I do? how will posterity account of me after my decease? my great concern shall be, how does the Lord look upon me? how do I stand in his books? for if he be angry with me, what the better to have all the world's good word, till he speak peace to me? but if he is pleased to accept me, and his word be on my side, how little then need I care what men say, or the world thinks? no such grief as to grieve his Spirit, and no relief can I find in the world, as long as all is to-pieces between him and my soul. But when he causes his face to shine upon me, O how can I then despise all that any has to object against me? to him must I stand or fall: and when he cheers me up, what can cast me down? when I can but be so happy to keep in with him; I will say to myself, (as Eccles. ix. 8.) "Eat thy bread with joy, and "drink thy wine with a merry heart, for now God "accepts thy works." And when the Spirit's oil of gladness is poured into my soul, O that it may make me more sprightly in his service, and more ready to every good work! that his heavenly consolations, like the sun and rain, may make me grow and abound in grace, and all the fruits of a godly conversation! that instead of sinning against bright convictions and gracious invitations, I may yield myself so tractable to be wrought upon by the Spirit of grace, that the pure Sanctifier may be also my sweet Comforter, to give me the best of all satisfaction, and to revive me with the greatest joy of his salvation.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** God the Holy Ghost ! 'Tis grievous unto me, to remember all my grieving of thee. Though thou art above the possibility of suffering any trouble from me ; yet, how distasteful and provoking in thy holy sight must all my aggravated sins needs make me ! O give me, Lord, I beseech thee, a humbling sense of it ; and forgive me all the heinous guilt that I have contracted by it, and make me uneasy in myself, till I am pleasing to my God : that it may be grievous as death to me, wilfully to offend thee, and all my life and my joy, to will and love with thee, and to delight myself in the Lord, and be acceptable to my God. Amen.”

MEDITATION XIV.

Of joy in the Holy Ghost.

O My soul, there is a joy as well as sorrow of the world that worketh death. The rejoicing in vanity and iniquity where will it end, but in lamentation, and mourning, and woe ? when the sinners that are quite out with God, and like to find the heaviest reckoning in the great day of the Lord, and can the worst afford to be so jocund and merry of any men in the world, and had more need to weep and howl for their wretched case, and their approaching judgment ; and by a penitent concern, and deep humiliation, to prevent their future doom and everlasting damnation ; yet are all

dissolved in sportiveness and gaiety of humour, and so pleasant and jolly, as if all their danger was over, and they were in the bravest case of any men living. Their uncouth rejoicing saddens my soul, to see the stupid malefactors making themselves music, in jingling their irons, and turning the most sorrowful of all things, (even the dishonour of God and the ruin of souls) into matter of game and merriment; never more joyful than when they have the least occasion, and are likely to smart for it most severely. Wanton and frolic only in quenching the Spirit, and filled with no joy but what pulls them from God, and fastens them in the devil's service.

But, my soul, there is a people that may, and should be a rejoicing people. Converts and renewed Christians that have made such an escape out of the damnable state; and have found such favour, and received such blessings from above; they have the happiest occasion to rejoice in the Lord evermore, and again to rejoice; doubling the joy, as they have received double from the Lord's hand, even deliverance from hell, and the heavenly inheritance among his saints. Great is their joy and peace in believing, and in hope of the glory of God. Yea, 'tis a joy in God's salvation, not only as reserved for them, and promised to them, but already begun in them. 'Tis a joy which strangers to the grace of God intermeddle not with; and which no man in the world can deprive them of. A joy in the Holy Ghost; for 'tis a "fruit of the Spirit," Gal. v. 22. and wrought by the Spirit of God. A rejoicing in the things, that he has wrought and done for the soul; rejoicing in his presence with it, and his grace bestowed upon it; as also rejoicing within the bounds that he has set, even in a spiritual and godly manner.

Though for a season, if need be, the godly are in heaviness through manifold temptations: and some-

sometimes they throw themselves into dejections, through the failings of their faith, and the prevailings of their corruptions; yet still have they in them the ground of rejoicing. And as physic helps to health, even their godly sorrow is in order to heavenly joy. To feel their hearts so tender, as to relent for sin, makes them much gladder, than the fool can be that mocks at it; and the joy of a conquest over it, O! how far does it exceed all the satisfaction that can be taken in it? while the jovial club pity the servant of God for wanting their delights; how does he pity them, that they have no better? And finds a sweeter pleasure in despising the baits, than they have in swallowing them. Prayer is a drawing with joy out of the wells of salvation; and gives a transport that is better felt than expressed. But, O! who can describe to the ear that marrow and fatness; the angels entertainment, which raised souls taste, in praising God with joyful lips!

To perceive the Lord enabling me for his blessed work, and favouring me in my pious designs; accepting my poor endeavours, and keeping me on the way to life eternal; shedding abroad his love in my heart, and reviving it with the witness of his Spirit, and the hope of his glory! after thou hast felt somewhat of this, my soul, tell me, if the world has any joys comparable to those of religion. O! what joyful gladness is sown for the upright in heart, and though there is a waiting time for the crop, yet in due season he shall see it, and come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Many lightnings of joy he has upon the way; but fulness of joy shall he have at the end.

But, O! my soul, how flashy and momentary is all the joy and triumph of the wicked? nothing but a frothy scum that arises from the creatures, and what the remembrance of God, and the world to come, strikes into the shadow of death. And so at
last

last it will leave them sadder than if they had never known it. Thus the loosest sinners, that are thought to lead the merriest lives, are really the greatest strangers to all substantial joys, rejoicing only out of God, the fountain of joy, and in nothing but what they shall not long rejoice in : yea, what shall bring them many thousand times more sorrow, than ever it gave them comfort.

See then here, my soul, the spight of the devil to fright the world out of godliness, as a melancholy business ; and make them believe, they must never see a merry day, when once they give up themselves to be led by the Spirit, under the laws of God's kingdom ; which indeed is the only way to live contentedly and comfortably, now and for ever. O ! let not Satan fill thy heart with any such hard thoughts of that religion, which is an eternal spring of heavenly consolation. For will not even thy own sense confute the slanderer ! when thou findest, that engaging heartily in God's holy service makes thee heartily joyful ; and when elsewhere, thou art but foolishly merry, and outwardly pleased with him ; thou art chearful upon the best grounds, and filled with a joy unspeakable and full of glory. Do not then bring a reproach upon the good land of uprightness, into which the Spirit of God has led thee ; nor disgrace religion, to make it look unlike itself, in thy sour and heavy conversation. But as long as thou serveest thy Lord faithfully, let it be also chearfully ; as one that is glad of the employment, and can no where ever be better. That thou mayest not only shew, but endear to men, the holy way, as the most excellent way, and give them a conviction, even in ocular demonstration, that the ways of godliness are ways of pleasantness, and the kingdom of God righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** My God ! the fountain and fulness of joy
 “ is in thy presence : but all the creatures are
 “ broken cisterns, where I shall be sooner cheated,
 “ than filled with any satisfaction, that is indeed
 “ worth the rejoicing in. O dull my appetite to
 “ the alluring pleasures of this life ; and inflame
 “ my longings after more sublime and worthy joys
 “ and delights than earthly, sensual, and sinful.
 “ Lord of love ! represent holiness in such an ami-
 “ able aspect to my eyes, as may win and charm
 “ my heart. And by the Spirit given me, shed
 “ abroad the love of God in my heart, and make
 “ me to experience the joy of the Lord, which shall
 “ be my strength ; and that spiritual, heavenly, di-
 “ vine, soul-ravishing satisfaction, of thy likeness
 “ and thy love ; which fills the heart with joy un-
 “ speakable and full of glory, and that not for a
 “ spurt, but to endure for evermore. Amen.”

MEDITATION XV.

Of loving the Lord our God.

TO love God, my soul, is better felt than ex-
 pressed, and I had rather experience and
 perceive little, than speak and tell never so great
 things of it. When thou canst say, I love God
 above all, O how much more is that than all the
 finest definitions of the schools ? yet, that I may
 the better understand, when I am possessed with it,
 let me a little consider of it. And what is love, my
 soul, but thy earnest desire and longing after a
 lovely

lovely and suitable object, and the sweet complacency and delight that thou takest in it? for love is all for union with the beloved, to approach still nearer to it, till we come to center in the fruition of it. It makes us sick of distances, and wearied with interruptions, that keep us off from the sum of our wishes. And if thou lovest the Lord thy God, my soul, such a strong bent and inclination thou wilt have after him; not only to enjoy him perfectly and eternally hereafter, but to have still more of him here, and to make as near approaches to him as possible, in this place of absence from the Lord. To seek his face, and be renewed after his image, and find his presence and favour; these are the most desirable things now to the soul that is smitten with the love of God. The very breath of the new creature made alive to God, is, my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. Nothing is so desired by me, and give me whatsoever beside, it will never quiet me. For I am capable of enjoying an infinite good, that has in it all manner of good, and beyond which there is no further good. Yea, which will never fail, nor wear off to become a less good, but continue evermore the same perfect good, and still to the full as good as ever it was. And O! what but the blessed God alone is this supreme and eternal good? all the world of the creatures is a dry and thirsty land, where none of the water of this soul-satisfaction is. Therefore overlook and pass by them all; to press hard after this God, most good and blessed for ever.

O my soul, dost thou stand so inclined and affected towards thy God? all the reason in the world thou hast to do it, both for his loveliness and his loving kindness; that he is incomparably the best of beings in himself, and that he is the greatest and dearest of all friends to myself; so that there thou canst not be deceived into love by any mistake; but the more thou

thou dost know, the better still thou must needs like: and scorn every thing else that would take thee off this Beloved, and fear nothing in the world so much as to lose him, and look upon the fairest creatures but as false wretched idols, that would divorce thee from him. And such pantings and breathings after God, though they may carry some uneasiness now in them, till thou reach to the compleat satisfaction of them: yet are they blessed omens of thy everlasting rest at last, in that sweet accomplishment of all thy desires, when thou shalt be ever with the Lord.

And O! what does the remembrance of any precious hours, that ever thou hast had with God, but inflame thy longings, to be so happy again? till from the little glimpses thou reach to the open vision, and from the love of desire to that of delight. And this delighting in God springs not only from the sight of what he has and is, to allure us to him; but also and chiefly from the sense of that particular interest which we have in him. And then is he to me the most delightful good, when I can indeed take him for my God. And every thing then is the sweeter to me, the nearer it is related to him: but himself is all sweetness, and his love better than life. And no such delightful minutes, as the happy opportunities of meeting and conversing with him, and opening all the soul to him, and receiving the tokens of love and heavenly communications, and all sweet endearments from him. Then shall I abhor to offend him, and rejoice to please him; and never think any thing too much to do for him. His love will constrain me ever and anon to be thinking of him, and still more and more to shape and conform myself to him; that so I may be most pleasing in his sight, and take the highest pleasure in his favour. I shall look upon him then, as the most inviting and deserving ever to have all my heart;
and

and count it not only the noblest honour, but the sweetest joy of my life to love him.

O my soul, beat off thy affections from every creature that would intrude, as a rival and competitor, with thy worthiest Lord and dearest Lover ; and no longer stand out from loving him, that has been so aforehand with thee, in first loving of thee. For is it not even natural to love my friends and lovers, that have done me good, and are still shewing me kindness? O! how dear then should the Lord my God be to me, that has bestowed all upon me, and is never weary to do for me? O! that his amiableness, my soul, may be laid open before thee ; and that thou mayest be convinced of the love he has for thee! and assure thyself, that all without him, and all that is short of him, (how fair soever it looks, and what great things soever it promises) is but emptiness and nothing: it will abuse and cheat thee, and thou shalt not find in it any thing to content thee, but what shall give thee more of the bitter, than ever it helped thee to taste of the pleasure. To love God with all thy powers, that is not only thy indispensable obligation, but will be thy only satisfaction, and turn to thy everlasting salvation. O be proud of the mighty privilege ; have no patience to want it, dread above all things to go without it, be all on fire to secure it, and to find thy blessed share in it. That still thy desire may be to him, who is altogether lovely, and thy delight in him who loves thee, even because he will love thee ; and not only has in himself all that ever thou wouldest have, but a heart full of love to bestow upon thee every thing to supply thee, to fill thee, yea to transport and most highly please thee, and that not only some short while, but for ever.

THE PRAYER.

" **I** Acknowledge and bewail the deadness of my
 " heart, and the coldness of my love to thee,
 " my God; that I have no stronger inclinations
 " after thee, no warmer affections for thee; that I
 " am so prone to prefer the present evil world be-
 " fore thee; and to be taken with any poor worth-
 " less trifles, more than with my supreme good
 " everlasting. O Lord, forgive my vile affections,
 " and mortify my carnal inclinations; and raise up
 " my grovelling soul, to seek thee, and the things
 " above. O! thou that art the amiablest in thy-
 " self, and the fullest of loving kindness to thy
 " children. Wilt thou, Lord, so open thy ami-
 " ableness to me, and so convince me of the love
 " which thou hast for me; that I may feel my
 " heart burn within me, and the love of God
 " mightily prevail over all, that would come in
 " competition with my Lord; that I may not
 " stick upon any, the fairest, sweetest, best, or dear-
 " est object, that would take me off thy love, or
 " cool me in it; seeing all is but vanity, and sha-
 " dow, and emptiness, and nothing compared with
 " the infinitely good and blessed for ever. Amen."

MEDITATION XVI.

Of communion with God.

O My soul, of all the leagues and fellowships in
 the world, none so great and sweet, none so
 happy and glorious, as the league with heaven, and
 communion with the blessed God. To keep the

fair correspondence above, and have a particular friendship with the Most High: our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost: to be great with God, and dwell in God, and God in us: to be so near related to him, even as if we were parts of himself: to have his eye and his ear, his kind visits, and the ravishing manifestation of himself, the tokens of his love, and the fruition of his gracious presence: O! how much of heaven is here, let down to earth? and will God indeed have such intercourse with the sons of men, and thus condescend to them of so low degree? will he bow the heavens and come down, not only once, to take upon him our flesh, but still to be with our spirits? O! how wonderful is the stoop in him, to come and be so nigh to us? and how highly favoured is the people that shall be admitted to come so nigh to him? how proud are men of their great relations, and to have interest and friendship with the men of might, those that have all, and bear the main stroke in the world? how do inferiors swell, and value themselves, upon such honour and favour? and how hardly can they forbear to look with scorn and disdain upon such as attain to none of this correspondence?

But, O my soul, how poor a matter is this to the divine intercourse, and intimacy with the God of heaven? dost thou call in question the privilege? does thy modesty shrink back, at the mention of such superlative pre-eminence, as too great to believe, and too good to expect? well mayest thou admire it, and stand amazed, that ever it should be so done to poor unworthy creatures, who are so infinitely beneath the eternal glorious Majesty of the world. Yet is not the honour and blessing too big for him, who is no less good than great to bestow. He has not only made thee capable of it, but made thee

thee on purpose for it after his own image; that upon thy conformity to him, might grow thy communion with him, and from the likeness might arise the dearness. And though thy sins might be a just bar and wall of separation to intercept all the correspondence; yet has he made a new and living way, even for guilty sinners to come to him, through the holy Son of his love. My soul, thou canst not go to the Father but by him: nor canst thou miss of good welcome and acceptance, when found in him. Indeed thou art alienated from the life of God, till he speak new life to thee, and raise up the life of grace in thee; and even change thy nature, to make thee of a heavenly disposition, fitted for the heavenly communion. For O! what communion has light with darkness? and how can a dead clod converse with the living God? or that which is nothing but filth agree with him that is all purity? though men and brutes live on the same turf together, yet they have no communion with one another, because of their different natures. And thou art an out-lier, a stranger, and foreigner, till regeneration has made thee a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God. Then he remembers thee with the favour which he bears to his people, when thou art incorporate as one of the number. Then he stands in all the relations that may invite thee to him, and embolden thee to come and find the kind entertainment with him, as he is a Friend, thy best Friend and Father, thy God and Saviour, thy Husband and Comforter. All which titles carry nothing but dearness in themselves, and encouragement to my soul. O what may not I expect from such a one? where can I go to be used better? with whom can I be taken up more to my satisfaction?

Wretched creatures! that prefer other fellowships, and use themselves to such haunts, as quite
take

take them off all communion with the God infinitely good. For where tempers and manners are so opposite, alas! what hearty friendship? when persons look two ways, and what the one most loves, the other cannot abide; what sweet union then is like to be? such as cannot skill of the holy Lord, and have no liking for his ways, keep off from him, and care not for having any thing to do with him. The loose ungodly gang fancy none but such as are of the same strain; and it shews what they are but to see where they love to be; for all their intimacy arises from their iniquity: and therefore they hang so together, because they are even as bad one as another. Such brethren in evil, do father themselves upon the great ringleader of all the wickedness: and betray their membership to that head, their derivation from him, and their concerns with him; how far they are departed from the living God, and what a vile dismal life they lead without God in the world; and so are the children of this world only for their own party, and all higher fellowship, and the conversation in heaven, is above their comprehension, and passes with them but for a mere whim and imagination.

But, my soul, better remember thy God and thyself, than to consort and strike in with such. Despise both their leagues and their joys, and follow hard after him, whom thou hast the greatest reason above all to regard and love. If he will vouchsafe to impart himself to thee, never shew thyself backward to draw nigh and close in with him; nor think it much to forget thy own people and father's house on earth; that thou mayest be dear and amiable to thy Lord and Father which is in heaven, but count it the most gainful exchange to leave all for him, who is so much better than all. O! let that which is the daily search of all holy souls in the world be also thine to seek after God, and to keep up the good understanding with him: remove the
the

the offences, which thou knowest will exasperate or disoblige him; and be not wanting in any offices of correspondence and endearment, to ingratiate thyself still more and more with him. For what mean all the ordinances of worship, and duties of religion, but to take off the strangeness, and to increase the acquaintance between God and the soul? that in especial manner, particularly called the communion, is to be used as the blessed means of the gracious Lord's own appointing, to strengthen thy interest in him, and renew thy friendship, and even to incorporate thyself with him.

O let the experience, which thou hast had of such approximation to God, and walking with him, make thee in love with all the opportunities of appearing before him. If thou rememberest how the Lord of love first revealed himself to thee, and brought thee into the banqueting-house, and overcame thy heart, and drew up thy affections, and opened heaven, and sealed thy hopes of his everlasting love, so as to take thee off, not only thy darling lusts, but even thy worldly comforts; O! canst thou not wish that such times might ever last? and, (as lovers spy and catch the opportunities of coming together) desire the free access to him, and those heavenly entertainments with him, which the world knows not of.

O what pleasure in the world, or satisfaction so sweet, as for dear friends to come and associate together, and enjoy one another? How ready am I to unbosom myself, and tell all to my friend? and count it the ease of my sorrows, and the multiplication of my joys, to communicate them to such a one. My soul, thou hast the same liberty to go and pour out thy heart, and open thy mind to thy God. Though thou must never think to converse as hail-fellow with him, upon equal terms; yet there may be as free and sweet correspondence between superior

rior and inferior, as between any equals ; if there be but similitude of qualities, and engagement and affections ; then there will be (the *idem velle et nolle* one heart and one soul, and love will shape itself to all the figures and motions of the Beloved. It will make the one stoop down, and the other stretch up : that there may be the meeting half way, or any way, to get into the fruition of each other's conversation. O ! may this be thy holy ambition and thy hourly care, my soul, to seek, and find and receive, and entertain thy God, with whom thou hast greater concerns, and more to do, than with all the world besides ; he does not need thee, he can be never the better for thee ; yet he is pleased to seek to thee, and comes and stands at the door, and knocks to be admitted by thee but extreme is the need that thou hast of him thou canst never do well ; thou canst not live without him. O then stretch upon the wing to come at him, and never refuse the offer that is made by him : observe with the narrowest inspection his way, his motions ? and know the aspect and voice of thy Beloved. If he gives a kind look or but the least hint ; O ! take it and improve it to make all thy advantage of it ; and let thy eyes be ever towards thy Lord, and thy heart running out after him ; and have somewhat ever and anon to say to him, and negotiate with him ; to keep the correspondence tight and warm ; for never will he be weary of thy hanging so much upon him, nor be offended at thy coming so often to him, or staying so long with him ; no, but the more thou art thus concerned, the more still shalt thou be favoured. Catch hold therefore of the happy privilege, and prize it, and use it, and make thy best and utmost of it ; rejoice in it, and value thyself upon it, and be thankful to thy God for it ; nor ever seek to quiet thyself in any thing else whatever thou

thou hast out or short of God, but let it be him, and him alone, that thou art for above all, saying with St. Bernard, (*Domine, tua non satiant, nisi tecum.*) Nothing, Lord, that thou givest me will content me without thee; all is insipid and unfavoury, (if I have not thyself; be thou ever with me, O my God, till thou hast brought me to be ever with the Lord.

In short, my soul, heaven hereafter will not be the beginning of quite another life, but the perfecting of what was here begun. Do not then look upon this communion with God as a mere reserve for the future state, but press after it, and now accustom thyself to it, as ever thou hopest elsewhere to be for ever happy in it.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** Lord, my God, thou hast made me for
“ thyself; and it is my duty, and also my
“ felicity, to draw nigh to thee, to keep in with
“ thee, and to obtain the blessed enjoyment of thee.
“ But O! how wickedly have I turned my back
“ upon thee, and been estranged from thee, and
“ struck into other fellowships, where I have lived
“ in the world without thee: for which thou
“ mightest justly cast me off, as a hateful object,
“ no more fit to be looked upon by thee. Yet,
“ where thou canst not behold me with delight,
“ Lord, of pity, look upon me in compassion; and
“ purge and discharge me from every thing that
“ provokes thy indignation. O bring me nearer,
“ and make me liker to my Lord; fitter to receive
“ thee, and to enjoy the blessed fellowship with
“ thee, coveting and prizing it above all desirable
“ things in the world. And then be pleased further to impart thyself to me, and come and abide
“ with

“ with me, and never leave me nor forsake me, till
 “ thou hast brought me to be ever with the Lord.
 “ Amen.”



MEDITATION XVII.

Of delighting in God's Word.

O WHAT a sweet and spacious field is the holy scripture, my soul, in which thou mayest traverse about, and entertain thyself with the greatest variety of wonders and delights! this letter of love from heaven, thou canst not peruse too often; but mayest make some of the best employment of thy time, to meditate in it day and night. There thou shalt find the noblest histories, the greatest remarks, the wisest counsels, the sublimest truths, the most surprizing passages, the most momentous concerns, the exactest rules, the holiest precepts, the weightiest warnings, the most precious promises, the highest of all encouragements. Away then with all the impertinent writings, the stained papers, that do but abuse, if not debauch the readers. O dear book of all books, that has God himself for the blessed author and eternal salvation, (with the way to it) for the subject matter! nothing comes with such power upon the heart: nothing gives such satisfaction and assurance to the mind: when it is, thus saith the Lord, it is beyond all the sayings, and confidence of the greatest men in the world. To this text, I bring all that I hear or read elsewhere: and in this centre, I fix, and find sure footing. Amidst all the uncertainty and contradiction of sentiments
 in

in the world, I am easy that I have the divine oracles by which I can safely abide.

"I rejoice, Lord, at thy word, as one that finds great spoils," Psal. cxix. 162. Every time I go into it, I make some new discovery, and get some rich booty. That which has more soul-refreshing sweetness than honey and the honey-comb, and more real worth than gold; yea, much fine gold. Of which well might the Rabbies say, "turn it over, and again turn it over, for all is in it." If I miss of the treasure, it is not because it is not there; but because I am dull, or out in the search. There I have not only the mind, but even the picture of my soul's Beloved. In the dark hieroglyphics of his works, I bungle, and feel after him; But in the clearer glass of his word I see him; yea, I hear, and know his voice from all the voices of strangers.

I will search the scriptures, for in them, I think, I have eternal life; yea, there I have the charter of my heavenly hopes, the deed of conveyance and settlement; what I have to shew, for my everlasting glorious inheritance: for if God hath said it, I doubt not to build upon it. What is nauseous then to some, and an eye-sore to others, I will dearly affect and lay it next my heart. And though the wisdom is too high for a fool, yet what the angels desire to look into, I shall ever think it worth my while most earnestly to inquire after; for it is the wisdom of God that will make me wise to salvation; and written, that I might believe in his Son, and believing, might have life through his name.

But, my soul, thou must not deal in God's word only to please thy curiosity, but to learn, and know, and do thy duty. Thou must study his law and love it, and set thy heart, and bend thy mind to go by it. Nor count it well with thee, till thou canst

delight, particularly, “ in the law of the Lord, “ and finds his statutes rejoicing thy heart,” Pſal. i. 1. and xix. 8. “ Yea, delight greatly in his Commands,” Pſal. cxii. 1. And how harſh ſoever laws and commands ſound in moſt ears, (be they never ſo holy, juſt, and good,) ’tis no piece of folly, but the moſt rational thing for me to delight even in God’s laws and commands. When, as in truth, they do enjoin me nothing, but what may make me eaſy now, as well as happy for ever. That is, to know the Lord, which is to contemplate and view eſſential goodneſs, original beauty, and love to ſtand in awe of him, whoſe fear will keep us from hell. To love him, that is love, and altogether lovely. To call upon him, that we may aſk and have; to truſt in him, that under his ſhadow we may be ſafe from all which threatens us. To recount his loving kindneſs, and ſing his praiſe, that our ſouls may be reſreſhed as with marrow and fatneſs. To do right to all, that we may have peace at home, and fair quarter in the world. To extend pity and kindneſs to the miſerable and needy: that we may feel a godlike pleaſure within us now, and lay up for everlaſting rewards hereafter: to abſtain from the ſordid, unnatural, and exceſſful pleaſures; which, inſtead of gratifying, do but put us to ſhame and pain: to keep us off the rocks of thoſe corroding paſſions, and the gulfs of thoſe fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which, (indulged) will never let us be ſafe and quiet, and comfortable.

And if ſuch as this be the work, which the law of God cuts out for us: away then, my ſoul, with all thy ſilly miſtakes of this righteous bleſſed law, and all thy groundleſs prejudices againſt it. Find fault with thyſelf a thouſand times, before ever thou offer to censure it once. Look upon it with other eyes now, as moſt friendly to thy nature, and no enemy neither to thy true pleaſure; thy preſervative

tive from misery ; thy way to glory ; and not only be reconciled to it, but in love with it, and bless God for it, and go on chearfully with the business it puts thee upon ; and run the way of his commands with an enlarged heart ; never thinking thou canst mend thyself elsewhere, or find out any better way in the world.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**HY Word, O Lord, is good, and I have reason to love it, above all the good of this world ; for, O ! what here can give such light and satisfaction to my mind ; such ease and joy to my heart, as that holy scripture, which is the kindest letter from my dearest friend ; the guide of my way, the resolver of my doubts ; the quieter of my fears ; the charter of my hopes ; the instrument of my pardon, and the records of my salvation ? O Lord, incline my heart to it. Fix my mind upon it, and make and keep me so in love with it, that I may never be weary of it ; but give my thoughts and studies to it, and take the greatest delight in it, and esteem the words of thy mouth more than my necessary food, and be no where so pleased with any entertainments in the world, as with the heavenly food of thy word, and the joyful news brought by the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

MEDITATION XVIII.

Of Boldness in our God.

FOR poor creatures to forget the distance between themselves and the glorious Majesty of heaven, and for vile sinners to rush in upon the most high and holy God, as if they had done nothing against him, or were even equal with him; like some rude fellows, at a public entertainment, not called, intruding before their betters, without any recommending, but the strength of their elbows. This is an intolerable sauciness and presumption. When audacious wretches can so forget God and themselves, and count it their valour, and their strong faith to trample down conscience, and fear nothing, nor ever regard what is said by preachers or scriptures; but hope on still, not only against the Word of God, but against all the reason in the world. When they fancy, only as they would have it, and are thus assuming, they know not why, but because they will be so; such kind of assurance calls for the judgment of the great day, to dash and confound it. For then they that so proudly bear up, shall learn to know themselves, and be utterly consumed with terrors; not finding the great Judge so easy to forgive them, as they have been forward to clear and fool themselves.

But though this impudence, and carrying on wickedness with such a high hand, will meet with confusion, and the bigger condemnation; yet, my soul, there is a boldness that well becomes the children of God; teaching them to cry, Abba, Father, and to entertain confidence towards God; when
their

their hearts condemn them not, for resetting his enemies, nor cleaving to any thing that he abominates. There is a parrhesia coming boldly to the throne of grace, and freely speaking our hearts, for which our Lord will never reprove us, but the better like us. When we come with the largest hopes, as to the kindest all-sufficient friend, that encourages suitors to come and be happy, in receiving of his bounty. And hence take such boldness, not only, that we come to a God, full of all that ever we can want to crown our wishes, but also one most ready to give and forgive: that puts us upon asking, and bids us enlarge our desires, that he may have the opportunity to answer them, and open our mouths wide that he may fill them.

Away then with thy distrust and consternation, my soul, when going to thy Father; let not a slavish dread damp thy devotion, and blast all thy delight in the best of Lords. And though thou knowest how thou hast offended, and deservest no better than to be abhorred; yet look unto Jesus, the propitiation for thy sins, that has fully paid thy scores; and then mayest thou have, "boldness and access with confidence, through the faith of him," Eph. iii. 12. And comfortably address, even to the God of infinite purity, through the holy Son of his love. Yea, and having received the atonement, mayest joy in this God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But then, because thy Advocate himself will not bear thee out, in thy rebellion against his Father, and thou canst not be bold in thy God, when thou makest bold with sin, but mayest well fear to be rejected by him, when thou dost not fear to go on in thy sins against him, and mayest conclude, that if thou regardest iniquity in thy heart, the Lord will not hear thee. O! then, here go, with the greatest caution to withstand every temptation, (come it with never so fair recommendation) that
would

would spoil thy interest and confidence in the God of thy salvation. And never believe there can be any thing in it, that will countervail the loss of such a blessed privilege, as the assurance and comfort thou mayest take in him, so long as thou keepst up the good intelligence with him. O put off the solicitation that would engage thee in any sin against the Lord, with this answer, "If I give way
 "to this wickedness, with what face shall I appear
 "before my God, that forbids and hates it?" I would not quit my part in his favour, nor be debarred of the blessed access into his presence for all the world. That I should be cast out from the Lord, and grow shy of God, and not able to think of him without horror, who should be the top of all my comfort. If this be the consequence of yielding to the temptation, I will have nothing to do with that cursed thing; for never can I subsist with any satisfaction of my life, when this passage to the throne of grace is to me blocked up, and I dare not appear before the Lord. O what refuge in the world like this? and how soon may every refuge else fail me? this therefore I must not, (I will not) put myself out of; but still keep the way so clear and open, that I may go to God, as my hope and my exceeding joy.

THE PRAYER.

"**H**OLY, glorious GOD! I am under a confusion and dread to shew myself in thy sight,
 "when I remember the sin and evil that I have
 "committed against thy laws, and the wrath and
 "judgments that I deserve at thy hands. Well
 "may I hang back in a guilty consciousness of my
 "sins, and the amazing horror at thy justice. And
 "no boldness can I have, nor access with confidence,
 "dence,

" dence, but only through the faith of thy Son,
 " who died to atone for my guilt, to make my
 " peace, and to set me right with the offended Ma-
 " jesty of heaven ; and not only to turn thy dis-
 " pleasure from me, but to incline thy kindness to
 " me, and cause thy face to shine upon me. O give
 " me good hope through grace ; and let Christ in
 " me, be my hope of glory. Yea, give me the
 " Spirit of adoption, to bring me up with gladness
 " into the presence of my heavenly Father ; that
 " with a sweet unspeakable satisfaction and assur-
 " ance, I may shelter myself under the shadow of
 " thy wings, and have confidence towards God,
 " through Jesus Christ. Amen."

MEDITATION XIX.

Of God's favour to his people.

THAT GOD is the best of beings, and the only
 original Author and Giver of all the goodness
 that is any where in the world to be found, is that
 whereof thy own reason will soon assure thee, O my
 soul, and that he is good to all, even the unthank-
 ful and the evil ; the bountiful provider for the
 whole family of his creatures, the Father of mercies,
 and God of consolation, kind and gracious ; yea,
 love itself, not delighting in the misery of any, nor
 taking pleasure even in the death of the wicked ;
 nor willing that any should perish, but that all
 should come to repentance, and so to heaven : this
 is the fair representation of God, which his own word
 gives me. Yet further than these common and con-
 stant effusions of his goodness, it acquaints me also,
 that

that there are peculiar instances, and distinguishing marks of his kindness. And these are privileges of the elect people in covenant with him; the believers whom he accepts in his Son, the godly whom he has set apart for himself, whose salvation he has antecedently secured, by choosing them before the foundation of the world. And afterwards, he not only calls them outwardly, by the ministry of his Word, but makes it the favour of life to their souls, by the efficacious operation of his Spirit: and justifies and absolves them from all their guilt, by the blood and merits of his Christ; and renews them still more and more by the workings of his grace; and preserves them from falling and perishing by his almighty power, and watchful care over them: and sanctifies and blesses to them, all that befalls them; till at last, he has put them past all danger, and settled them in the full possession of all blessedness, with himself in his everlasting heavenly kingdom.

O my soul, how happy are the people that are in such a case! the blessed of the Lord whom he has blest, and they shall be blessed. Who can hinder their bliss, when it is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom? it is not having the world then that makes men happy; but having the Lord for their God. When, alas, there may not be more wretched creatures, than some that are counted the happiest men in the world, though they may have as much as they wish; yet they have not enough to do them any real good. But in all their outward fulness, they carry lean, starved souls within. And as much as ever they have to enjoy for a moment, they will have nothing at all to live upon for ever. No, they have all their good things in this life; and after a short comforting, will find an endless tormenting. O it is not corn and wine, but the light of God's countenance

nance that will put the true gladness into my heart. All the richest and sweetest fruitions of this world, what are they but the bones and scraps which God throws to the dogs? O how much better things has he for the children of his family, even things that accompany his salvation. And to such is he kind indeed, upon whom he is pleased to bestow these most precious of all gifts; though they have not the fat of the earth, if they have the blessing of Heaven it is enough. The Lord is their shepherd, they shall not want; want no good thing that will indeed do them good for ever. But one thing is so needful; and that thing God has given them. And that is the root upon which will grow all the rest that can be wished by them.

O my soul, never think thou hast enough, if thou hast not him who is all; and his favour, in which is life. Here shew thy good understanding, and the greatest wisdom of choice that any one can ever shew, whilst thou art not for thy portion in this life, but for thy part in Christ, which will stay by thee to life everlasting. Know the gift of God, and care not so much how the world smiles or frowns upon thee; as how he looks and carries towards thee. When one gracious glance of his eye, one kind word from his mouth, is as much worth as all thy salvation. Let it not be the favour of men that I court, but intreat his gracious favour with my whole heart. Beg for this favour, my soul, as for thy life, for all hangs upon it, even eternal life is his gift, and by grace thou art saved. Not for works of righteousness that thou hast done, but according to his mercy. O then give him the glory for what he has done already, (that by the grace of God, thou art what thou art) and for that heavenly grace planted in thee, which thou hast ground to hope will grow up into eternal glory. Be a follower of God as a dear child, when thou hast such

pledges of thy Father's love. If he has done the most, and the greatest things for thee, in remembering thee with the favour which he bears to his people: O remember thou thy duty, and be always mindful of his covenant. Know the things that are freely given thee of God; and forget not the blessed benefits, that set thee even above the highest prince of the earth, who is not also the favourite of heaven. As long as thou prosperest, my soul, I can be happy, though I want all else which the prosperous sinners do enjoy. But without the divine favour, to make their souls prosper, they will be miserable for ever. Let them vaunt and huff, and scorn, no matter; what need I care for their favour, when I have the favour of him that is infinitely their better? if of a rebel, the Lord has made me a son, and of an enemy a friend; and has out of my low estate raised me to the honour of his saints. My soul, having seen such good of his chosen, be joyful in thy God, and glory with his inheritance: and never leave off to bless him for his unspeakable gift, and all spiritual blessings, in heavenly things in Christ Jesus.

THE PRAYER.

“ **A**LL my hope, Lord, is in thy tender mercy;
 “ and all my happiness comes of thy free
 “ gift and bounty. Whatever else I have, still I
 “ am destitute and wretched without thee, and
 “ whatsoever else I want; yet, I shall do well and
 “ be happy, if I can but attain to enjoy thee. In thy
 “ favour is life; and what I have known of thy
 “ grace, and the tokens which thou hast given me of
 “ thy love, are all the ground of my hope, and all
 “ the comfort of my life. And still do I desire to
 “ wait upon thee, my God, for the carrying on
 “ and perfecting of thy own gracious work in me;
 “ which does not depend upon my frail will, and
 “ my

“ my poor services ; but upon thy good pleasure,
“ and thy mere grace which brings salvation. O
“ revive my soul with the sense of thy pardon, in
“ the Son of thy love : and make me to know the
“ things freely given me of God, that I am accept-
“ ed, and shall be saved through Jesus Christ.
“ Amen.”

MEDITATION XX.

Of praising the Lord.

O My soul, wilt thou not magnify the Lord?
and shall not my spirit rejoice in God my Sa-
viour ? when his goodness, his love, his benefits,
even extort it from me : and if I will but stand still
and muse well upon them ; the fire must needs
kindle and break out into a flame. As hard as my
heart is, yet sure, if I smite the rock, with any
strokes of smart and close consideration, the waters
cannot choose but overflow, like the streams bub-
bling up, and running fluently from the fountain.
If men praise the bridge they go over, and run out
in the commendation of their kindness, for whom
they fare the better : shall not my God be praised
by me, that still has done so wonderful things for
me, and shewed such sweet and precious favours to
me ? Has he not regarded me in my low estate ?
O in how many low estates has he looked upon me,
and from thence raised me ? has he not brought
me out of nothing to a noble being, among the
worthiest creatures in this world ? are not the toad
and I fellow creatures ? and what thanks to me that
I have

I have the advantage? the potter had it in his hands, to make me a vessel of such, or more dishonour. And does not he still hold me in the life that he gave me? and keep the frame that he reared in such repair as I have it, and lengthen out my days among a thousand casualties, that sweep away such multitudes before me? yea, does he give me, not only the necessaries, but the conveniencies of life; the fat and the sweet, and those overflowings of divine bounty, that help me to live plentifully and handsomely? am I from a poor beginning, come to make some figure in the world? and is my little brook swelled up, to diffuse itself over the banks? when I came over Jordan, with no more than a staff in my hand. Am I become two bands? O who am I, and what is my father's house, that the Lord has brought me hitherto? was I ever brought down by affliction, even to death's door; so that I thought myself going the way of all flesh, and was given up by others as free among the dead? and did he, that has the keys of death fetch me back, and give me a new lease of my life? if the grave then cannot praise him, nor death celebrate him; yet shall not I, that have been kept out of the pit, and had even a resurrection from the dead?

But has not the Lord looked upon me in a lower state yet, than all these; in a case worse than nothing, even in my blood to bid me live? when I lay on the brink of desperation, and even the borders of damnation: did he, with a hand stretched out from heaven, come and rescue me from the jaws of hell, and raise up for me a mighty salvation? after he had shewed me great and sore troubles; did he turn again and comfort me on every side, with the gift of his Christ, the light of his countenance, the Spirit of his grace, and the joyful hopes of his glory? O my soul, here is love that passes my
utterance;

utterance; passes my knowledge. There is no comparison between it, and all the kindness that ever can be shewed, to make one the most happy man in this world. That the Lord should pass by so many, to look upon me with an eye of saving mercy! the more I roll upon it in my thoughts, the more I am rapt with wonder and joy, at the discriminating favour; greater than to make me the highest king upon earth, or emperor of the whole world.

And shall not I magnify him, that has so magnified me? but, O my soul, how shall I do it? for greater than he is, I cannot make him: nay, so great as he is, I cannot represent him. All that ever I can here attain, is to raise in myself, and others, some high and glorious thoughts of him; to aggrandize his condescension in stooping, to set up such a wretch; to stand amazed at such pleonasm of mercy, and so publish abroad the inestimable love, as to affect many with it, and engage them to make up the comfort with me, in singing his praise. That we may exalt his name together: yea, to call in all the choir of heaven, to take the work off my hands, for which I am not able.

O what a faint echo of such received mercies are all my praises? yet must I go as far as my strength will reach; and though I am ashamed of the poor returns, yet may I be proud of the high office, which the greatest saint or angel need not blush to be seen in. And how can I be listless to that heavenly employment, which is such music to the soul, and makes such melody in the very heart? can I disgust marrow and fatness, and turn away from the joyful and pleasant thing, that sheds the sweetest perfume and relish all over me? O here, may I even lose myself, in the bottomless abyss of most delicious pleasure and joy in the Lord! and let me not lose my share in that most ravishing entertainment,

to

to triumph and glorify in him, who is the life and joy of the world. When he has not only fitted me for it, by the Spirit given me, but also engaged me to it by the biggest obligations laid upon me. Let it not be only, the hollow God-be-thanked, but bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Or else all the most rhetorical encomiums will make no melody in his ears, who searches the hearts; when the praise results not from the internal sense, and the admiring thoughts I have of God's love, and the favour from above. My soul must be dilated, and even all in a flame, and my spirit in a ferment and elevation, till I am transported even out of myself. Such are the ascensions and heights of devotion, that sometimes raise holy souls, till whether in the body, or out of the body, they can hardly tell; and therefore some little preludiums of those glorious praises, which are to be the joyful business of the blessed for ever.

Now, the lower I sink down in the examination of my sinful self, the higher shall I rise in the celebration of God's praises. When I know how I have forfeited all, I shall learn how to value the least drop or drachm of mercy; and then think with myself, O what manner of love is this, which exceeds even my faith, as well as my expectation! who can comprehend the length and breadth, and depth, and height of it? I know not what to say to it, but I am unworthy: O how unworthy! and not unto me, but unto my God alone be all the glory.

My mouth, Lord, shall be filled with thy honour, and my lips shall praise thee. The best member that I have shall pay that tribute, which the dumb creatures cannot express; but my heart shall be charged with the chief concern; and my life shall tell abroad what I feel within, that things holy and heavenly, do not make me sad and heavy: that I can be pleasant and pious both together, and heartily

tily merry without forgetting God, and turning all religion out of doors: that times of thanksgiving shall not be, (with me) only times of flesh pleasing, nor sacred seasons my ungodliest opportunities, nor holy days the profanest of all the year. But my rejoicing shall be before the Lord, and under the shadow of his wings. Not that I am rambled from him, but in the blessed Mediator brought nigh to him, and got in with him. My meditation of him shall be sweet, and I will joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Yea, he himself shall be more, and dearer to me, than all else in the world, that ever can tempt and please me. O may I still delight myself in him, and render all due praises to him; yea, blessing and honour, and glory and power, and salvation and thanksgiving, to the Lord my God, for ever and ever.

THE PRAYER.

“ **S**HALL I only crave at thy hands, and not
 “ thankfully acknowledge what I have already
 “ received from thee, O my gracious Father! when
 “ all possible thanks and praise that I am able to
 “ render, is a debt which I am every way bound
 “ to pay to the Lord of my life, the God of all
 “ my mercies! but O! what acknowledgement can
 “ I ever make, sufficient for such riches of grace as
 “ I have found, to bear down before it still all the
 “ regard of my unworthiness; and still goes on to
 “ oblige me with renewed favours every day and
 “ hour; not only without any of my deservings;
 “ but notwithstanding all my great and manifold
 “ provocations? my God! I can but recount and
 “ own thy gifts: yea, I cannot shew forth all thy
 “ praise: I cannot praise thee at all, as thy mercies
 “ do deserve: nor dost thou need any of my prais-
 “ ing to add to thy glory: but I do need it, to
 “ raise

“ raise my heart, and to offer at somewhat towards
 “ the discharge of my debt. Unto thee, O God,
 “ do I give thanks, unto thee do I give thanks.
 “ And, not unto me, Lord, not unto me, but to
 “ thy name be all the glory, now and for ever.
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION XXI.

Of enmity against God.

WHEN I consider with myself how infinitely good, and altogether lovely is the blessed God, without any thing at all amiss, defective, or exceptionable in him; and so every way compleat and sweet, and perfect, and inviting, I cannot but wonder, my soul, that there should be any such thing as an enemy of his to be found in the world. For goodness, even commands love; and when we know it, we cannot chuse but love it. But, when I hear the account given by God's word, and see it so commonly exemplified in the course of this world, how man is not only fallen from the Lord, but fallen out with him, and has got a corrupt venomous nature, a perverse will, and a desperately wicked heart. There is no withstanding the open evidence, and sad proof that comes in so fast: what a generation of vipers, spiteful at all real good, haters of God, and enemies of the Lord, this present evil world swarms and abounds with. And, O! that I had at home within myself, no seeds of this enmity so apt to be sprouting out, in taking petts at Heaven, and striving with my Maker, censuring his ways, quarrelling his Word, and resisting the Holy Spirit of God.

I find

I find in scripture, that men are by nature the children of wrath, and enemies in their minds through evil works. The grand enemy of God and goodness has been tampering with them, and gained them over to his party. He has soured and poisoned even the whole mass, and not a member of mankind that escaped him, but carries an old grudge that still lies at the bottom, and is never healed before conversion, nor then perfectly cured neither. In some the malice lurks more clandestine, and they carry so fair, as to pass in the tale of friends, and shew love with their mouth; though they are but back-friends, and ill-willers at the root. (*Manet alta mente repostum*) The serpents covered with painted skins, have yet their stings to strike in upon occasion. And so cold and heartless are they, to espouse the cause of the Lord, that, when they are no more with him, he reckons them against him, for he is no stranger to the grumbling within, let it be lodged never so deep in the heart. And though they shew demure abroad, yet the making a god of their belly, and giving their minds to earthly things, proves them enemies to the cross of Christ. For, whosoever will be the friend of the world, makes himself the enemy of God; yea, but the carnal mind harboured within, is enmity against him.

But in some it breaks out more notoriously, and they throw off the visors, to shew themselves bare-faced opposers; and how far they are from any peace and accommodation with the Majesty of heaven, at whom they have taken such implacable offence, and against whom they carry such a bitter deadly spleen. And that, as he is the holy Law-giver, who hampers and galls them with his precepts; and so limits and restrains them, that they cannot stir a step as they would. O! how does this enrage and mad the lusts and passions, that will ne-

ver endure to be so curbed and controuled! how do they stomach and spite him; because he will not leave them to themselves, to be, and do as they please, but obliges them to live by the rules, which, it is death to them, but to think of being under! and also, as he is the righteous Judge, who will one day take account of their obedience to his laws; and bring them to answer for all their contempt of his authority, and all their rebellion against his Majesty, and will not warp from punctual justice in any one's favour. They like him still so much the worse, and are the more desperately out with him, because he will not be partial in their case; nor spare them when they lie at his mercy, seeing they would not take quarter at his hands in his time, and upon his terms. O! how is he then hated by them, that he is too big for them? and let the judge be never so good in himself, they swell and gnash their teeth at him, as the worst enemy they have in the world, because he will do justice upon them, and render to them according to their works. When they look through the bloody spectacles of their guilt; and see nothing but the scarlet robe, and all the frightful indications of their own condemnation: hence arises, not only their trembling before him, but their indignation against him.

And this makes them carry towards God, as men usually do to their enemies, even to keep off from him, and care not how little they have to do with him; to shew themselves so averse and listless, to do any service for him, and rather plotting and striving to hinder what pleases him, to hurt his cause, and vex his servants; scarce affording him a good word themselves, nor caring to hear others speak in his favour. But when religion loses, and his honour is eclipsed, and his Spirit grieved, and all abomination not only passes unpunished, but grows rampant, (for being countenanced and applauded)

plauded) then erecting their crests and plumes, as if they had got a victory over Heaven, and had nothing to do but rejoice, and swagger, and triumph,

Thus fool-hardy wretches take up the cudgels to fight with their glorious Maker, and Judge eternal. They think themselves too goodly to be his humble servants; and the contest between them and the Lord is, whose will shall stand? whether he or they shall carry it, and get the better. And their meetings and excesses are to them, like a sort of sacraments, by which they muster their forces, and bind themselves to one another, and so strengthen their cause and party. And in the pot valour, what care they for God, or Christ, or any thing that stands in the way of their riot? what is the hallowed season to them? shall such as they be bound like sneaks to the religious attendance, and come and wait upon their enemy? they do not owe him so much service. And what use can they find of his name, but to blaspheme and pollute its honour; of which he has declared himself so jealous and tender; and to take that for a kind of instruction, how to vent their malice, where it may be most keenly resented? when they come to understand, which is the apple of God's eye, and what he will take most heinously, as the worst affront they could tell how to offer: then have at that, setting their mouth against Heaven, to let fly at the best of beings. And is not this enmity with a witness all over? what have such to do with his Word and holy things; but only to spend upon them their scoffs and drollery, and so to make themselves merry? like the brave champions that dare strike at all, and such wits of the edge, that can handle the keenest edge-tools, to fool and jest their souls out of heaven, and play and laugh themselves into endless weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

O thou

O thou cursed breed-bate, sin ! that sottish creatures should lay thee in their bosoms ; nor only be mild to thee, as a harmless diversion, but fond of thee, as all the joy of their lives ! O what work hast thou made in the world ; not only to throw up a partition-wall between God and man, but to turn him against them, them against him !

O ! my soul, do presumptuous sinners ever consider, whom they encounter ! does the pitiful stubble know, what a consuming fire it engages against ? will the great and glorious God still so take it from them ? will not the most just and holy One be avenged of them, and give them their own ? and will not the ALMIGHTY prevail, and prove quite too hard for them ? my soul, the word is gone out, and down they must ; and O how short is their triumph ! what a flash the present jollity ! their flourishing like grass, what is it but the prelude to their everlasting woe ? O then never envy them, nor fear to oppose them, nor be discouraged to espouse the holy cause against them. For, alas, they are but a company of condemned malefactors, and God has them in chains invisible, fast enough, and like grease, they will soon consume in the fire, into smoke, consume away, and tho' in the mean time, they are as smoke in our eyes ; and no wonder if they hate the frail children of our Father in heaven, who have first hated him, that is beyond all exception ; yet, as long as their enemies are also his, they may hope to see them quelled and mastered in due time, and to be rid of them, as never to see them any more for ever. Be they never so many or mighty : greater is he that is in his people, than he that is in the world : and if God be for them, no matter what thousands or millions are against them. How soon can he make all enemies his footstool, and put them past plaguing the world any more ! But, O
Father

Father of mercies! forgive them, for they know not what they do; and shew the wonders of thy power and grace, to slay the enmity, and strike it dead; and yet turn and reconcile them to thyself, in the beloved of thy soul.

THE PRAYER.

" **A**S I was by nature the child of wrath, so I
" have been an enemy in my mind, through
" evil works, and as an enemy have I carried to
" thee, O Lord, and exercised acts of hostility a-
" gainst heaven, and for my sins thou art angry
" with me, and all thy dreadful judgments hang
" over me. And woe to me if I be not reconciled,
" if this saddest of all breaches be not healed, but
" easy is the mind, and happy is the case, to have
" pardon and peace with God ratified, and sealed
" to my soul, and all my hope, and comfortable
" repose in the name of the LORD that made hea-
" ven and earth. O that I may, above all things
" to be desired in the world, seek this blessed at-
" tainment, and that God would help me to find
" it, and guide my feet into the way of peace, that
" what cost my Lord Redeemer so dear, to pur-
" chase for me, may be made sure unto me, and
" being justified by faith, I may have peace with
" God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MEDITATION XXII.

Of reconciliation to God.

OFTEN have I wondered at it as a strange expression, that sinners should be prayed to be reconciled unto God, 2 Cor. v. 10. For God to be reconciled unto sinners, that sounds much to the purpose, and nothing is more to our comfort, but for the malefactor to be reconciled to the offended power; for the guilty creature to be reconciled to his glorious Maker, it may be thought a mistaken notion, and improper expression, yet indeed, my soul, there is no slip or impertinence at all in the case. For, alas! poor sinners are not only much estranged from God, but filled with rooted prejudices against him. And O how hardly can they bring themselves to any sweet thought or good opinion of him! when they look upon him, as contrary to them in his nature, and hard upon them in his Word, and all against them in his dealings. They will have it, that he has no kindness for them, though he has otherwise assured them, and themselves have otherwise found it, yet the offence they will take, where none is given, and still they keep it up, they know not why, but because they will be cross and perverse. And O how wonderful then is the patience of Heaven, so to bear with them? Yea, and send his messengers to them, to parley with them; yea, to intreat and beseech them, to lay down their enmity, and be at peace with the majesty offended by them, that so
soon

soon could put them off his hands, and throw them down to hell, without any more ado. Yet in astonishing mercy, he has provided a mighty Mediator, for adjusting matters, to mutual content, not only, that God might be satisfied, and the wrong done to his justice and holiness be repaired: but that sinners also might be satisfied, and the poor souls, dismayed and cast down, might be relieved and set at ease, and put in good heart, when they see a full atonement and propitiation made, and such a worthy sufficient oblation on their behalf, wherein God has declared himself to be well-pleased. That the God of heaven should so look after them, and shew his care of them, his concern for them, and kindness to them; in sending the most excellent person, so near allied to himself, and even all one with himself, clothed in their own nature, not only to declare his merciful inclinations to them, but to lay down his own life for them. This makes them that were pulled down with doubts and dread, and seeking retreats where to hide from the God whom they durst not appear before, to revive and cheer up, and draw nigh with full assurance of faith; even through faith in the blood of Christ, which he shed, to make a compleat satisfaction to the justice of Heaven, for the sins of the world; this helps to pluck up the bitter root, and to remove the old grudge, to shew us God in another light, and to beget a better opinion of him in our minds; as one willing and forward, to come to terms of accommodation with us, seeing he would be pleased to find a ransom himself, and provide the price to be paid out of his own exchequer; the blood shedding of our blessed Saviour for us, begets (as we say) better blood in us, and makes us entertain worthier thoughts of him, that deals so well by us, and surprises us, with such wonders of mercy shewed upon us; for an offended punishing God, we do
not

not like, we cannot love, but when we come to understand his kind designs upon us, and believe the love that he has for us, this allures us to approach to him, and to love him, because of his first loving us, and so our hearts are won, and joined, and secured to the God of love.

My faith in Christ, then, O my soul, is of as much necessity, as my peace with Heaven, and all my reconciliation to God hangs upon it, for never at the bottom, can I stand well affected to him, till I come to look upon him, as an appeased God, in the Son of his love, till his faith enters to sweeten matters in my soul, there is that lies corroding and fretting within, which will spoil all the cheerfulness and acceptableness of my services, till I am satisfied of God's fatherly kindness, in my great surety, who has turned his face with favour, to look upon me, I cannot serve him as a child, but a slave. Thus then all my love springs from my faith: and all my dear-ness with God, depends upon my believing in his Son, dying for my sins, it is in Christ crucified, that I see God pacified, and all the breaches between him and my soul healed, and that lifts up my head, and brightens my face, and puts a new life into my hopes, and all amiable apprehensions of God into my heart, when I see nothing in him against me, but all on my side.

Thus, my soul, does the blessed Jesus reconcile me to God, and to complete the work, he also turns and renews me, and makes that holy and happy change upon me, whereby his word and law (at which I was offended) becomes most sweet and dear, and all harmonious to me, and instead of snagling and stumbling at it, I grow in love with it, and take great delight in it, and plainly see, that there is no living so satisfied, easy, and happy, as within such compass, and by such rules, yea, though he did not impose it, yet would I chuse it, and to be and do as
he

he would have me, is even as I would have it myself, I have not a word to object against it, no, it is my own wishes, and I bless his name, that has brought me, to be so minded and affected, to like well of his laws, and be highly satisfied in them, and heartily subscribe to them, and stand up to plead for them, and all my rancour and prejudice against them is dropt, and fallen to the ground, and all the old stubbornness, and resisting the things of my peace and salvation, at an end.

O my soul, yield up thyself overcome by such sweet mercies of the Lord, and let there be no more the least muttering against my gracious God, but all thanks to him, and all joy in him, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE PRAYER.

“**B**lessed God! My sins have thrown me out from thee, not only as a stranger, but an enemy. But thou hast sent thy Son, the powerful Mediator between God and man, to give mutual satisfaction on both sides; in providing for thy honour, and for our comfort, that the wrong to thy holiness and justice might be repaired, and that our souls, dismayed and cast down, might be relieved. O gracious God! in him, be reconciled to me, and also so reconcile me to thyself, that I may not be offended at any thing, which thou art or dost, seeing there is nothing in thee, or done by thee, but what is most worthy of thee, who art good, and dost good, and nothing else but what is good. O make me, Lord, more sensible of thy goodness, and more thankful for it, and draw me nearer, and engage me faster to thyself by it, that I may not harbour any the least prejudice against thee, but love still to be with thee, and rejoice in the Lord evermore. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXIII.

Of revolting from God.

EVER since the time that sin first entered into the world, and made the sad breach with heaven, O my soul, what a work have we still upon our hands, to keep our treacherous, shuffling hearts, in any fair correspondence above, and upon any good terms with God! how are we estranged even from the womb! and how long do we live in the world without God! so great aliens to him, as if there were no such being for us to regard! and after we begin to emerge out of this darkness and distance, and better to acquaint ourselves with the Lord, and think it time to return home, and get into the household of God: yet, O the dead weight of our sinful corruption that hangs upon us, and is still dragging us another way! and throwing us down into frequent fits of that spiritual epilepsy, which is the common distemper of poor lapsed mankind: the hearts that were lately scoured and cleansed, and set right, O how soon do they gather dust and filth, and rust again, to put them at a stand, or all out of order? O what a wrong bias has our nature got, to carry us away from that which is best for us! with how much ado is it, that we are brought to our God! how do we hang back as loth to approach the blessed presence! but when the Lord's gracious attractions have drawn in those, that of themselves had no mind to come, and he is found of us that sought him not, and we

we are surprized with the preventing mercy, and so affected with such kindness and love, that methinks, we shall never forget it, and resolve never to abuse it, yet still does the old principle lie rooted at the bottom, which makes us bent to backsliding; fickle and wavering to good, attentive to the tempter's beck and call, and (not knowing when we are well) ready to shift, though much for the worse, uneasy to be held to our duty, we would enlarge our way, where we may have enough of liberty, to run upon misery, yea, and enlarge our conscience, to bring it to our bow, and make us think we act wisely, to do so wickedly. When the world has caught our hearts, how do they fly then to our treasure on earth, and make that their centre of rest! when we admire the beauty, that glitters in our wanton eye, and dote on the pleasure that ravishes our fleshly sense: then the thoughts of God, and things heavenly, begin to sit heavy, and the business of his religion is looked upon as a troublesome interruption, then the heart is gone a-whoring from the Lord, and though the face of piety may not yet be put off, yet all is but formality and hypocrisy, and abomination in the sight of God, that remains to look fair to the world; and the time is watched, even to throw the yoke quite off, and run into all looseness of manners; and thus how have several that gave the greatest hopes, gone out in stench and scandal, to sadden some, and harden others, and irrecoverably lose themselves.

O my soul, shall not their falling be thy warning? and their dreadful destruction, thy continual admonition? that thou grow not inobedient of thy own state and way, bold to sin and impatient to be checked, shy to God, and careless of his interests, keen upon the world, and cold to heaven, shaking hands with the power of godliness, and ready to despise

despise and scoff that, which had once thy warm heart, and highest veneration.

The most critical inspection is here no more than thou hast need of, it calls for the wisest caution, and the working out thy salvation with fear and trembling, yea, with an early prevention, to look to things in the beginning, when as there are many steps, in the falling way, and it is not all on a sudden, but by gradual process, that men reach to the fearful end of their wickedness, and thy very fear of falling, my soul, may be the means of thy standing; to apprehend thy danger, may help to prevent it, when thou knowest how the spiritual treasure, that lies within, is besieged and assaulted on every side, from enemies abroad, and the very heart that holds it, is so false and ready still to give it up, all the good that is in thee, being an exotic plant, which grows not naturally in that soil: therefore, without good cultivation, and careful management, how apt will it be to wither and fade away! well then may it awake thy concern and jealousy, thy utmost endeavour and application, to keep the happy station, where the grace of God has placed thee, lest thou tumble down the stairs again, after thy advancement to so good a degree, and to be as tender and timorous of sinking in thy spiritual condition, as of decays and beggary, in thy worldly estate; or any threatening symptoms, that strike at the health and life of the body.

O canst thou chuse, my soul, but often thus call thyself to account? is my heart right with God? are things so well with me, as formerly? have I not lost of my love, and zeal, and care, and diligence, and devotion, and heavenly conversation? am not I going down the hill, in the way to be undone? does not the world encroach, and gain upon me, to look better to my eye, and taste sweeter to my appetite? have not the charms of the bewitch-
ing

ing syren inveigled my heart; and damp't me to the love of God? is the thing that would divert, and carry me another way, so little, I need not scruple or stand upon it? then why, my soul, should I offer to break with my God, for so small a matter? but, ah, how can I count that little, which is like to cool me to him, if not to part between me and him? for he is a jealous God, that will not endure a rival: and if I begin but to look with a lustful eye, upon another beloved, how soon will he discover me, and alter his countenance and carriage towards me? away then from me, whatever would have me from my God. If I but leave out a prayer, or curtail, and run it out of the way, that I may be somewhere else, more to content, O how soon may such omissions and shufflings grow to more ungodliness? and one neglect and contempt make way for another, and so the breach wax wider: till God be forgotten, and left out, even days without number! O how does it concern me then, to have my eyes inward, and see that matters be not suffered to lie careless and desperate there; to run from bad to worse, till all be lost.

Wretched creatures! that have nothing but an empty confidence, to skin over all the wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores? When indeed, this wicked world has none in a worse state, than some that are so presumptuous of the fair terms, on which they are with God. But O happy the man that feareth alway! because, thus dreading the worst, he provides for the best, and prevents the surprizing downfall into that condemnation of the devil, which it were a miracle, if the inadvertent and unwary souls should escape.

My soul, the blessed God, and his cursed deserters, cannot both have thee, but when thou art confederate with them, thou art lost to him. O let them never seduce thee from him, who must stick to thee,

thee, when they will all be sure to fail thee, O Lord, what a mere flash is all the world's kindness? and what a spurt and moment will it last with thee; till thou wilt be to seek for a better help, and find no manner of comfort in that, which now thou art tempted to make all thy joy? O leave all for him, that is better than ten thousand worlds, the best friend, the only support, to be relied on, the only satisfying rest to center in, the fountain of joy, and the highest of all pleasures to be enjoyed for ever, thou knowest not what thou lovest, my soul, in letting go thy correspondence with him, and thy interest in him, who not only has, but is infinitely more than the all of this world: an unknown bottomless depth of all that is sweet, and precious, and good, and blessed: whatever thou canst need, whatever thou canst wish, to make thee easy, and happy eternally, be the bribe then, the bait, the lure, the darling, what it will, that solicits thee to leave him, say, Lord! what shall I ever think of altering for the better, when I set up an idol in thy stead, and prize and affect a creature, more than the Creator, blessed for ever! go where I will, it will be extremely to my loss and hurt. For with thee is all, and beside thee, nothing is to be regarded at all. Be gone, ye vain delights, tempt me no more, ye seeming advantages of this world, ye are mere shews and shadows, I see through you, and beyond you all, come, Lord, my God, my wealth, my life, my joy, my glory, my all, I fix upon thee, I acquiesce, and set up my rest in thee, I will hold thee, and not let thee go. Though the tempter shall offer me, (as he did my Saviour) all the kingdoms and glory of the world, I am sure nothing can ever make me amends, for the loss of the ever-living God, my exceeding great reward, whose all-sufficiency will content me, where this empty world does but abuse me: and whose eternity will be my indefeasible inheritance,

heritance, when all the flying shadows will be past over me, and all the present props of the creatures will be struck from under me.

O my soul, shall I leave him, that seems so loth to lose me? that has ever been so patient with me, so kind to me? what offence has he given me? what hurt has he done me? wherein has he been wanting to me? am I able but to express all that he has done for me? O my Lord, and my God! whither shall I go from thee! thou hast won my heart: I yield myself a captive to thy mighty love, so unspeakably engaged by thee, I will cleave to thee, and nothing shall ever part me from thee.

But yet, my soul, I must not forget how frail I am, nor grow secure as out of danger, where God's Word bids me take heed to myself, and take heed lest I fall; and what falling is there so dangerous, as backward? may not habits be lost, as they are got, by a series of actions! and the further I run back, shall I not be the lother and unabler to return? when ill custom has clenched and rivetted me in allowed wickedness, and the resisting of light, and abusing of grace, and ingrateful perverting the loving kindness of the Lord, has provoked him to pour out his fury upon me, and to pronounce, that I shall not be purged from my filthiness any more, O let me not be high minded, but fear, lest doing as the wicked, I fare as the wicked, and making bold to live in my iniquity, also die in it, and be for ever lost, when so found at the last.

If I have forgotten the name of my God, shall not he find it out? If but my heart be going on the gad, and some filthy lucre or carrion pleasure has me, more than the blessed God has me, O how soon will he be aware of me? and then, what though the world keep up their good thoughts of me? when my heart is nothing but off and on, fast

fast and loose with him, that requires truth in the inward parts, and plays the traitor with my heavenly Sovereign, and the harlot with my blessed Bridegroom? how shall I answer this in the day, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ! O my soul, shall I now faint and desist, even in the end of the race, and lose all the pains that I have been at in the service of my Lord? shall I tread so many weary steps heaven-ward, and after I have put my hand to the plough, look back, and never reap any fruit of my labours? shall I strive, and climb a great way up the hill, and get even within sight, and ready to touch the felicity at the top: and after all, fall head-long to the bottom, and ruin the whole design; and exchange the eternity of pleasures, for never-ending miseries?

O may not I thus let my heart run on in the revolting humour, till it will be too late for a cure? or how dear shall I pay for the treachery; though there be a recovery? O the convictions and convulsions, the prayers and tears, the groans and pangs, the ghastly frights and sorrowful repentance that it will cost me! God deliver me from the malady, that (if ever it has any) must have so severe a remedy, and make me feel such grievous smart, as I had best use all my utmost care to prevent.

THE PRAYER.

“ **A**FTER thou, O Lord, hast, with many striv-
 “ ings, brought me home to thyself, and so
 “ far recovered me out of the old apostacy, as to
 “ set me in a state of safety: O how prone am I
 “ to relapse, and still bent to backsliding! consider,
 “ O Lord, I beseech thee, and pity my weakness
 “ and my danger: and keep me off from every
 “ hazardous encounter, awaken all my concern,
 “ and

“and engage my utmost endeavours, to prevent
 “the grievous downfall: Yea, stretch forth thy
 “own hand, my God, to uphold and secure me.
 “For I shall be gone, I shall be undone, if thou do
 “not stop and prevent me. O do not leave and
 “forsake me; lest I forsake thee, and depart from
 “thee, so as never again to return to thee: which,
 “O gracious Lord, forbid and avert for thy mer-
 “cies sake. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXIV.

Of turning to the Lord.

O My soul, if the great Tertullian could say,
 (*Nulli rei, nisi pœnitentiæ natus*) that he was
 born for nothing else but repentance: O how
 should I, a wretched sinner, be concerned, to have
 my repentance keep pace with my sins; and as I
 fall, still to rise again, and not to run such risque as
 to forget to return? now what is this conversion,
 but a turning from our sins and worldly vanities
 to God, and his holy ways? I have (like a lost
 sheep) gone astray, and turned to my own way. I
 have got an ill bent, and turned away my face from
 him that made me. I do naturally follow after
 things vain and forbidden; and am addicted to the
 service of the world and lust, as my masters whom
 I honour, and fulfilled their pleasure. The while
 turning my back upon my great Creator and Pre-
 server; and calling contempt and affront upon him,
 in preferring the basest things above him: yea, re-
 garding the devil's offers and temptations, more
 than all his Word and promises. And the further

I do proceed in such ways, at the greater distance do I run from him; and the longer and harder voyage shall I have to come back; the more desperate work shall I make, and the more painful business shall I have if I do recover. Now in order to this return; I must understand how I have struck out and lost my way, and got into a perilous path: that I may be convinced, what woe-need, and high-time it is for me to start back, and provide better for my security and salvation. I must also feel my sins, so as to be burdened with them, and grieved for them; but when they sit so uneasy upon me, I may indeed think and resolve of parting from them. And how great is the mercy of God, even in that seeming severity, to make me feel such smart and bitterness in them, that I may have enough of them, and fall out with them, and give a discharge to them? but without a principle of grace, a seed and spirit of life, to quicken and rouse me: O how shall I arise and walk! What motion before life? I shall lie dead and perish in my sins, unless the Lord Christ, who is my life, bid me live.

Yet must I use his holy means; because he that does it for to me, will not do it without me; but works in me and by me; to make me the instrument in his own blessed hands, for doing myself the saving good. It is not therefore in the way of sloth but of my duty, that I must wait for the Lord; and humbly expect his gracious aids, and almighty assistance, to help me for the doing of that, which by my sole might I should never be able to effect.

And though I am not to be converted from paganism or heresy; yet there is a most needful conversion, from ungodliness and iniquity, from the errors of practice as well as of judgment. Yea, after the first great conversion; when I pass from death to life, and come to the knowledge of God's saving truth, and to the participation of his renewing

ing grace: there is a later conversion; yea many such conversions, out of my falls, and repeated sins and backslidings: when I so revolt from God, that after I have returned, yet I have need to return; and must not think that a remarkable change, once for all is enough: But upon the renewing of my sins must also renew my repentance; and remembering from whence I am fallen, arise and go to my father: Not ashamed to own my need of new conversions, but blessing the Lord that I have the liberty and opportunity, so to recover myself to amend the matter and try again to do better.

And what if it cost me trouble, my soul? have not the most excellent and desirable things in all the world, difficulties attending them? and will not even worldlings and epicures deny themselves many things pleasing to them for their greater good and advantage another way? but, alas, the pleasures of this life, so false, and base and smarting, and short lived, and followed with their stings, are these such precious things to be held to, even at the loss of my peace, and God, and heaven? O what good will that worldly good do me, for which I go off from God, and withstand his word, and run counter to my duty? What will it but enflame the reckoning instead of making my accounts more comfortable at the last? and if any do despise me for turning to the Lord; who are they but such, whose judgment is fit only to be despised? It will make me truly wise and worthy of honour; and esteemed of God and his saints, and all the most judicious, and excellent in the earth. Yea, after all the contradiction of sinners, it will bring me to glory everlasting in the kingdom of heaven.

Away then with all discouragements and objections, my soul. And say not, it is a hopeless course and to no purpose. But the greater thou apprehendest thy sins, see the greater need thou hast to return.

And

And where sin has abounded, remember how grace uses much more to abound. Whom, but such as count themselves undone, did the Saviour of the world come to recover? when Judah was grown notorious, for revoltings and adulteries; yet said the Lord to her, after she had done all these things, turn thou unto me, Jer. iii. 7. and Isa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God; for he will abundantly pardon." O what filth cannot be fetched out by that innocent, meritorious blood which cleanses from all sin? 1 John i. 7. It is all one with infinite power and love, to pardon the great and many sins, as the small and few. The full price is paid to clear off all my scores, and none of them shall be charged upon me: If I will hear his voice that calls me; but returning to the Lord my God he will forgive me; he will receive me and not so much as remember my sins against me: No, nor mention them to me.

And though I have been baffled formerly; yet let me try to do it more sincerely, that it may be also effectually. Nor think to do it all through my own power, but look up for help from on high; and lean upon the gracious promises made to cherish good desires, and poor endeavours. When it is the work of God, and that which he favours, and is so much pleased with: I will go in his grace and strength, hoping to do it with good success. As long as I have his call, and am still under his means; the way is prepared for me, and all looks inviting upon me. It is but going to the Lord my God, who will cast out none that comes to him. But while I continue in my sins, I am in the hands of my worst enemies. They blacken the heavens over me; and make the heavy judgments of God ready to fall down upon me. They spoil my rest, and make rods for my back,

back, and it is the foulest cheat, to persuade myself I shall be fine and easy in them, and have a brave and happy time to enjoy them. For, alas! I do but disquiet myself in vain, to turn from one vanity and vexation to another; and shall ever be restless and short of the content that I seek, till I return to the Lord my God, and there reach the journey's end of all my weary motions; and find the substantial treasure, and the soul-filling good. O! here is the only centre of thy rest, my soul, here thou shalt be quiet, and pleased, and rid of thy fear and pain. Nor shalt thou ever repent of this repentance, or be sorry for the change; but bless the time that ever thou didst hear and follow him, who called thee to him. It will be the heavenly comfort of thy conscience, and the unspeakable joy of thy heart, to think what a jail and hell thou has escaped; and what a new life thou art born into; what a glorious heaven sitting up for. To the Lord then I will forthwith surrender myself. O! I have too long kept off from him; too often stood it out against him, but I will do so no more; I will not yield to the temptations that would detain me in my sins, but will now have done with the cursed things. I have formerly thought of it, but now I am resolved upon it. Turn thou me, O Lord, and so shall I be turned. Accept my intention, and confirm my resolution; forgive me mercifully, receive me graciously, and I will bless thee, and praise thee, O my God, eternally.

THE PRAYER.

“ **H**OLY God! from whom I have foolishly and
 “ wickedly departed, help me so to examine
 “ myself, as to find out my sins: and not only be
 “ convinced of them, but humbled for them, and
 “ converted

“ converted from them. O give me, not only the call
 “ but the will and power to return unto thee ; and
 “ give me the resolution and fortitude to break
 “ through all the impediments that would detain
 “ me from thee. O let it quicken and encourage
 “ my return ; that notwithstanding all the greatness
 “ of my sins, and the frequency of former disap-
 “ pointments, yet there is hope and help for me ;
 “ and yet I may effect the great and blessed work,
 “ and come and be graciously received and kindly
 “ used, and become pleasing to God, and do the
 “ best thing that ever can be done for myself. And
 “ where I stand off, and am not forward to do such
 “ good to my own soul ; Lord, be thou kinder to
 “ me than I am to myself : and take me out of my
 “ own, into thy better hands, to fetch me home to
 “ thyself. O speak thou the word, and that will
 “ do the work, and my soul shall live, and ascribe
 “ to thy name all the glory now, and eternally.
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION XXV.

Of Fearing the Lord.

O My soul, to fear that great and fearful name
 the Lord my God, to stand in awe of him
 that made and governs the world, and will judge
 the quick and dead, and has power to kill and cast
 into hell, to fear before him continually, is not only
 my obligation and duty, but to cast away his fear
 and grow upon him, and make as bold as I lift with
 him, is the most desperate absurdity and madness.

For

For who in his wits would not observe and revere, one in whose hands he is, and at whose mercy he lies, to be made happy or miserable by him for ever; though the fear, which must be my care, and whereof I must make conscience, is not a servile dread of God as a tyrannic power: nor to look upon him under such a horrid idea, as shall fear me from him, and make me in pain but to think of him; for this is not to glorify, but dishonour him: and these rueful representations of God beget no good blood, no ingenuous temper, nor carriage fit to be encouraged. Yet must I have such a filial reverence of God, as becomes his child; and such a holy fear as consists with his dear love; such a vigilant caution as shall be the preservative to keep me from things injurious and provoking; and such a fear will never make me a slave, to live in continual terror of God, as a dire avenger; but make me easy under him as the best Father, whom I would not disoblige, and am afraid to loose: and the more fearful I am to offend him, the bolder still I may be in him. When I dare not do wickedly against him; I may dare then to rely upon him, and to expect the greatest things from him.

Let who will then harden their hearts against the fear of God's glorious Majesty, and venture to despise, and even set him at defiance, and trample his laws; and scorn it, as too sneaking for them to be under such restraints, and make a mock of the denunciation of his judgments, and jeer at the tenderness of his servants: shall they so harden themselves against God and prosper? will he be out-braved by them, who is terrible to the kings of the earth, and makes the devils in hell tremble? no, my soul, the bolder they can make with his laws, the more fearful expectation remains for them of his wrath. The less afraid they are of sin, the more reason they have to be afraid of hell; and they that are now the
fearless

fearless sinners, shall one day be consumed with terrors. All their fool-hardiness and desperate courage will then miserably fail them, when the God whom they dare, shall come as a lion upon them, to pull them out of every fortress where now they shelter; and to rent the caul of their hearts, and tear them in pieces when there shall be none to deliver.

O! my soul, I will not be ashamed to own my fear of what they deride, and yet hope to be happier in fearing always, than they that have no fear of God before their eyes, and not fear to lack any thing good for me, when I am in continual care to do as he would have me. I will fear his name, and tremble at his Word, and carry still as in his sight, and have an awful regard of him, even when I lie never so secret, and always endeavour to approve to him my very heart. His fear shall be the curb to hold me in from sin, and the spur to put me on for duty; and then do I fear him indeed, when I set him before me as my Overseer, and go full of concern to please him, and set his Word before me as my rule, and by it guide and govern my heart and life; and so fearing to offend against him, I need not fear to be condemned by him. When my heart is tender towards him, he will have a tender regard to me. And though I fail in many particulars, as a weak child, he will look upon my careful heart, and my holy surety: and spare me, and accept me, as a gracious God, and most merciful Father in the Son of his love.

THE PRAYER.

“ **B**lessed is the man that fears thee, O Lord,
 “ and stands in awe of thy Word, and dares
 “ not adventure upon any thing, that he knows to
 “ be provoking in thy sight. Such holy fear will
 “ be

"be no bar to my happy state; but it is the sweet
 "fruit of thy dear love, and the sure fore-runner
 "of thy heavenly joy. O let me shew my love to
 "thee, and my hope to enjoy thee, by such fearing
 "to offend thee. My God! make me thus timo-
 "rous all the days of my life; that I may have
 "boldness at last in the day of judgment. Though
 "I do not fear that thou wilt be severe against me,
 "yet let me fear to sin against thee; and so let me
 "observe thee, and fear before thee. That yet I
 "may love thee, and trust, and delight, and joy in
 "thee, through my Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

MEDITATION XXVI.

Of trusting in the Lord.

O My soul, as I am a creature, my being is de-
 pendent, and I can no more subsist of myself,
 than I could make myself; but I have need of a re-
 sort to fly to, and of a support to lean upon. And,
 where can I find a sufficient security, and rock
 strong enough to build upon; but in the LORD
 ALMIGHTY, the God of my salvation? For, O
 how many cases, wherein vain is all the help of
 man, and none of the creatures can give relief? in
 sorrowful straits, I may but augment my sorrow, to
 expect that from them, which they have not for me.
 "But in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting
 "strength," Isa. xxvi. 4. And because of his strength
 "I may trust in him, and wait upon him," Psa. lix.
 9. For where can OMNIPOTENCE be at a stand? and
 what can be too hard for him, who reared the
 world with a word; and still does whatever he

pleases in heaven and in earth? when he will work, who shall let it? the hardest things upon his revealing of his arm, have nothing hard in them. But let the case be never so knotty and snarled, how soon does the only wise God know how to unravel it, and deliver us? a word of his will do the work. How easy can he give all that I need? and how quickly can he do all that I wish? now if I would trust an able and kind friend; O! where shall I ever find one so able, as the Lord of all power? where one so kind as the Father of mercies, and the God that is love? when I fear the Lord then; I will not only trust in him, "because he is my help and my shield," Psal. cxv. 11. But, because "as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him," Psal. ciii. 13. Nay, "though he slay me, yet will I put my trust in him," Job xiii. 15. Because I know he has designs of sweet mercy, even in all the seeming severity. I have tasted that he is gracious, and all the experience of my life can tell his goodness and mercy. I know it, I have felt it; and upon him that has done such great things already, I will hope to do all the rest for me. He is the faithful God, that never breaks his word. Where he has but spoken, then I will rejoice in it as a done thing, and only wait the time. They are strangers to him that dare not so depend upon him. For, "they that know thy name, O Lord, will put their trust in thee," Psal. ix. 10. O what would we not commit into the hands of our approved trusty friend? why then, my soul, shall I misdoubt him, that is immutable and never-failing? who will hold out still the same, when all other supports fly from under me, and there is an end of all that they can do for me: when my "father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up," Psal. xxvii. 10. He changes not, and his love is also like himself, an everlasting love. Here then

then is the safe hand indeed, to trust my all into ; and here I leave thee, my soul, and O may this be thy rest for ever !

And when my sins shake my faith, and make me afraid, then will I look unto Jesus, who is the propitiation for those sins, and in whom God is not only merciful, but faithful to forgive every penitent believing sinner ; though there is matter of indictment abundance against me ; yet so does the blessed Saviour take it off, that it shall not be imputed to me, now it is only a reconciled God, that I can securely trust in ; a God at peace with me in the Beloved, and in the Lord Jesus alone it is, that I have boldness, “ and access with confidence, through the “ faith of him,” Eph. iii. 12. What I cannot deal with them, nor stand under, I will put it off to him, and cast my burden upon the Lord. All my expectation shall be from the great Author and Finisher of my faith : I will stay my mind upon him ; I will repose my trust in him : here I shall ease my heavy heart, and find peace and rest, safety and boldness, comfort and rejoicing, yea, leaning on my Beloved, and hoping in him ; I shall praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

I will not trust in the health of my body, or the endowments of my mind, or in any enjoyments or allies that I have in the world, but will take the Lord alone for my trust, and all my hope, and the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever ; I will trust in him, and call upon him, and follow after him. My believing shall be so far from hindering my praying, that the faith shall give the prayer life, and make me the more earnest to cry mightily to God, when I am persuaded, that it shall be to good purpose, and turn to a happy account. I will not tempt the Lord my God to look for his help out of his way, though my trust shall rid me

of anxious fears and desperate doubts; yet shall it not evacuate my due care, and best endeavours, that so I may approve it a genuine trusting in the Lord, by going the way of his Word, and may never be ashamed of my hope, but helped and delivered by the Lord, and saved, because I put my trust in him

THE PRAYER.

“**L**ORD, what wait I for? thou knowest my hope is in thee. O whither else can I betake myself for succour and relief; but I shall be deceived and disappointed of my expectation; nothing in this world to be depended upon, that can bear the stress, or answer the cravings of my heavenly immortal soul. Nothing that can stay by me, and be a complete and everlasting satisfaction to me. O! take me off all other confidences in any thing to be trusted to in myself, or in the world. And never let me think of rest any where to be found for my soul, but in the Lord, my Righteousness and my Redeemer; to whom let me look for ease, what time I am made afraid by my sins: and in every state, let me lean on my Beloved with the whole of my dependence; expecting from thee, O God, my Saviour, all that ever I would have to do me good, both here and for ever. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXVII.

Of the Providence of God.

O My soul, thou needest not fear that he, who in wisdom has made all his works, will leave them to be carried at random, after he has made them; but dispose of them, and shew a particular care for them, so that every serious observer may see his over-ruling good hand upon them, what the Lord did at first, in like manner does he still; even whatever he pleases, in heaven and in earth. 'Tis as he will, and second causes are not left loose to act as they list, without a subordination to the first cause of all. No, the supreme Mover puts and keeps all the wheels in motion, and still orders them their several turns, both how and when. So that the things which seem merely casual accidents to us, are not so to him; but certain effects and appointments according to the counsel of his own will; to whom are known all his works from the beginning. Even those things that appear most likely to be left at perfect liberty, as depending upon the free-will of man, even the preparations of the heart in man, as well as the ordering of his ways, yet are of the Lord. Yea, the very miscarriages of his creatures, though he is never accessary to them, yet he suffers, and over-rules them. And when wicked men mean only the gaining of their own ill ends, he makes them serve his holy designs. And those things which seem so far below the least glance of God's eye, yet does he no more disdain to make them the subject of his providence, than he did to make them the work of his

his hands. The birds from day to day, find supplies without their catering; and he feeds them, though they know not who it is that provides for them. Nay, even one of the most worthless sort, a sparrow shall not lose its life without somewhat of God in it. And lower yet, that which is so contemptible, to a proverb, (*ne pili facio*, not valued of a hair) yet the very "hairs of your head are all numbered," saith our Lord, Matt. x. 29, 30. He is not unconcerned in the smallest things that concern his servants. "Does God take care for oxen, then?" 1 Cor. ix. 9. Is not a scruple, supposing those creatures to be exempt from the laws of providence, but only an intimation of God's more peculiar care for those whom these do serve. As if the apostle had said, he that cares for oxen, which drudge for men, will sure regard the men much rather. As nothing is too big for his power, so nothing is too little for his notice: but his concern lies from the top of the creation, quite to the bottom. He has every creature under his control, as well as in his eye. He neglects not the conduct of any; and yet he is infinitely great, even in ordering of the least.

Here then is a noble theme for thy contemplation, O my soul, wide as the world, and high and deep enough to employ all thy wonder. But O how small is the justice that can be done to its tractation in this narrow room? Yet look a little further where the prospect is so inviting; for no optics so pleasant as to see divine Providence, operating every where, among all the creatures, in various manners. And where the great God so condescends to work all in all, do thou ascend to observe him in his works, and remember him in his ways. But where thou art not able to discover his work abroad, from the beginning to the end, keep more at home, and see what remarks thou canst make in the history of myself:

not

not ascribing all to chance and fortune, to good or bad luck, when a hand from on high has been stretched out in every turn ; and a gracious providence still has chose all my inheritance, for me and raised me the friends and supplies, which are owing to his fatherly care and love ; and not to any of my forecast and conduct. O how often have kind events been wrought off to my hands, and things done for me, even without me ; yea, and made to succeed best of all to my wishes ; even when brought about against my designs ? How often have I had strong impressions upon my spirit, to go to such places where I scarce knew what was my business ; and yet the event taught me how well it was that I went ; and shewed me the work there provided, that I had to do. And how often have events befallen me, that looked sore against me, and I was ready to quarrel with Heaven for being so hard with me ? yet afterwards I have not only been reconciled to the crosses, but saw cause to pay my devout thanks to the wise mercy of my God, for doing me so much good by the seeming evils. So have I seen, not only the smiling face of God in my comforts, but felt the kind touch of his good hand in my very crosses. How often have I been surpris'd with success in my journeys ; as if the Lord had sent his angel before me to prepare my way, and contrive the accidents of my stages, to carry me on with courage and comfort ? how often have I found myself supported in threatening dangers ; as if a hand out of the clouds had catch'd hold of me, to bear me up and pluck me out when I saw no way to escape, and had no power to do any thing for myself ? how often have I had a sudden impulse to begin the work, which before I never had thoughts of, and saw but a very few steps before me how I should go through with it ? yet setting upon it, I was in the progress, surpris'd with assistances so coming in, that I scarce knew where to leave

leave off. I see, my soul, that I am not so much master of myself, as to direct my own path, or to command my own choice. And I must say, here I am now, but I know not what the Lord has yet to do with me: for I find myself as an instrument in his hands, and more at his disposal than my own. Yea, even when the doors are all locked up with sleep and I am purely passive; yet he comes in upon me, and warns me in a dream, and makes my reins instruct me in the night-seasons.

Besides the way of God's calling me at first, and opening before me the passage to a better life, as some changes of lower circumstances that made way for a greater change; the most pertinent books hit upon, without my seeking; the most efficacious ministers and advantageous friends, sent to me, or I to them, beyond my own contriving or thinking: all which furnish me with many sweet experiences of the loving kindness of the Lord; though I am not to tell every particular to the world. That which to me looks the most amazing of all, is, that the holy righteous God should not only bear with me so strangely in all my sins, but even when I have been engaged in a way that was not good, and broke through the rebukes of conscience, to take a loose in the course where my heart condemned me; the God of all grace has then thrown some bar in the way to stop me; and when I was impatient so to be hindered, and would rush on notwithstanding; yet he has not left me off so, nor let me alone to finish my sin; but, with one method after another, so followed and plucked me back; till I have been convinced and reduced, and become otherwise minded; and brought again to my obedience, and my peace and comfort; settled in a more hopeful posture, and glad with all my heart to have the cursed thing struck out of my hand, which I was so loth to part with, and rejoicing that I was so interrupted, nor suffered
according

according to my own ill bent, to run upon the precipice to my ruin.

Here might I proceed, in tracing the passages of such particular providences: but it may be thought too much preaching of myself: therefore I add no more; nor should have gone so far, if not to provoke others more to reflect on themselves, and take a survey of their lives, and be so wise to observe such things, that they may understand the loving kindness of the Lord.

Thus, he that took me out of the womb, has held me up, and led me on, ever since I was born. And how do I rejoice to think, that still I am in such gracious hands? to which I commit myself, and trust in the Lord that his goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and that he will be my guide, even until death, and never leave me nor forsake me, till he has brought me safe through that dark vale, to the blessed land of everlasting life. Bless the Lord then, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; but treasure them up in grateful memory, to his honour, and to thy everlasting consolation. These are thy sweet and wonderful ways, dear Lord of love; so thou bringest many sons to glory, after thou hast first guided them with thy counsel. So, my God, dost thou watch over thy children for good; not suffering those who would, to be thy foes. Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but to thy name be all the glory, now and for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“THE same good hands of thine, O Lord, that
 “made me, I perceive still taking hold of me,
 “and reaching out to me, to support and lead me,
 “to guide and feed me, for it is not in me to direct
 “my own path, to command my own safety,
 VOL. I. R “or

“ or to chuse my own portion ; but I have a wisest
 “ counsellor, a stronger keeper, a better provider,
 “ to conduct me, to support me, to take care of me,
 “ and chuse my inheritance for me. In the hands
 “ where I am, there I would be, and there I rejoice
 “ to be. For thy hands, Lord, are the best hands ;
 “ and into them I humbly commit myself : and of
 “ thee, my gracious Father, I earnestly beg, still to
 “ keep open thy watchful eye upon me, and con-
 “ tinue to instruct me, to order and manage me,
 “ and carry me safe through all the varieties and
 “ intricacies of my passage here, till thou hast
 “ brought me past all my care, and trouble, and
 “ hazards, to rest and triumph in thy kingdom
 “ and glory everlasting. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXVIII.

Of the severe strokes of God's Providence.

THE whole world, my soul, what is it, but the
 great family of the great God ? who, be sure,
 will rule his own house well, and order all in a man-
 ner worthy of himself. Indeed, the common course
 of his Providence runs so smooth, and easy, and reg-
 ular, that nothing appears in it, but what is sweet
 and beautiful, harmonious and grateful to all. Yet
 are there some gloomy eclipses, some eccentric mo-
 tions and boisterous hurricanes, so startling and as-
 tonishing, that they puzzle and amaze, even the
 wisest and best of men. And though they dare not
 object against them, yet they know not what to say
 or think of them. Not only the monstrous pro-
 ductions

ductions and prodigious phenomena, such strange appearances as put nature in a disorder, and strike the spectators eyes with horror, and make the ears of them that hear to tingle, but the sudden turns of states, and breaking of families; taking away the most useful and excellent persons, that, we thought, could worst of all be spared; throwing down rulers that were the darlings of mankind, and the pillars of the earth, and setting up the tyrants and oppressors that make havock of the church; and, instead of keeping, break the peace of the world; giving a commission to war, and pestilence, and famine, to go and sell the inhabitants of the earth; and not only take here and there one, but sweep them off by thousands and ten thousands; suffering persecutions to rage and worry, and waste the sheep of his pasture; and to afflict and break in pieces the children of his love; so that they lose, not only the hair of their heads, but even heads themselves. And O how often do we see good men come to untimely ends: the best fare worst; and some of the greatest benefactors of the world find the hardest quarter in it? Now all this looks so unlike the order and decorum of divine providence, that it has tempted some to question whether there be any such thing; and even they that fear and love God, have yet here so stumbled, that they could hardly recover themselves.

And how often, my soul, hast thou been at a sad loss here, to reconcile such cruel work and tragical passages with God's most wise, and good, and righteous government of the world? that he could hinder the whole evil and confusion, and remove every occasion of such objection, there is no more room to doubt, than of his being. Whence it is evident that it is not without his will, any more than without his knowledge: and if it be his will, I am sure then all is well or will be well; though I understand

stand not the reasons of it, nor can undertake to be accountable why things are now so carried. "Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the deep waters, and thy footsteps are not known," Psal. lxxvii. 19. 'Tis too deep for me to dive to such a bottom; if there be any bottom, I cannot reach it. For "unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out," Rom. xi. 33. To see the wheel within a wheel, and unriddle all the intricacies of Providence; to follow it through all the heights and depths of its mysterious proceedings: this is not for one of my contemptible size to attempt. O how silly and arrogant should I be, to cite the Judge of all the earth to answer at my bar! If there be mysteries of state beyond my ken, shall I not leave to the incomprehensible Majesty of heaven some (*arcana imperii*) such secrets of government as will be secrets to me as long as I live? nor must I expect to know them now, though, (through his mercy) I may do it hereafter. This I know, that righteous art thou, O Lord, and just are thy judgments. Thou hast still good cause to do all that thou dost; however that cause be yet to me in the dark: and even the surprising alarms in nature's clock-work have not an empty sound, but a significant voice and meaning, though it may be in so strange a language that it comes to me as to a Barbarian. There is no fault or mistake, even in the sharpest of all thy dealings: and whoever find fault with any, do but charge God foolishly, and take upon them to censure they know not what. If then I but know it to be the Lord, still I will say, let him do what seems him good; and not open my mouth to mutter the least against it, when it is his doing. For, alas! I am too short-sighted to see the end and drift of all his designs; and I shall take false measures if I go by outward appearances. But let him chain up or let loose

loose the dog, I'll take all well from such a hand. Let storms arise, and the ship be tossed and driven, I dare trust such a pilot, who will omit nothing that is fit to be done, nor do any thing that had been better to be let alone. I know there are dark shades and some black strokes, even in the loveliest picture; and the exactest piece of arras may look rude, if I cast my eye only upon this spot or that patch by itself; when, take all together, there is nothing but symmetry and beauty in the whole contexture. And O how complete and ravishing will be the entire scene of Providence, laid open all to my view hereafter; many the parts of which I know not what to make at present.

My soul, remember where we now are. It is but the place of our passage and probation; and here is no determination of our standing condition. But they that lose at present may yet be no final losers. All their seeming hurts may do them no real hurt. The only wise God, who has both worlds still in his piercing eye, does not make such a matter as we do of things present; knowing that men are but characteristically and improperly called happy or miserable here, let them enjoy or suffer what they will; because they shall all be called to a new reckoning. And the more unequal distributions are in this day, they do but still more confirm me in assured expectation of another day: when all will be rectified beyond exception to every one's satisfaction. In the mean while, then, my soul, let me not make Providence but Scripture my rule. For however I may be out in judging by the former, I am for ever sure in going by the latter. Which lays it down for eternal truth, that the wicked man is a miserable man, however he escapes or prospers in this world: and that none can undo or harm any that are followers of that which is good, and followers
of

of God, as dear children; what rough and severe usage soever they meet with here, nothing shall obstruct their complete and eternal bliss hereafter; nor ever be able to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

THE PRAYER.

“JUST are all thy judgments, O Lord, and never to be blamed; but they are a great deep that cannot be fathomed. Still thou hast good reason to do as thou dost, though that reason may be to me so much in the dark, that I can only stand still, and admire, and revere, what I am not able to account for. O who maketh me to differ; and what am I better, that, like as others have done, I should not suffer! Blessed for ever be that distinguishing mercy, which has caused the destroying angel to pass over my door; where I know how justly thou mightest have done the same execution. I tremble before thee, O Lord, and yet I rejoice with the trembling; and to thy name I give the glory that I have escaped such calamity. O never let me entertain an unworthy thought of my all-wise, and just, and good God; but justify, and clear, and adore thee in all evermore. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXIX.

Of the usefulness of afflictions.

TO count them happy that endure; and think good to be afflicted; and pronounce the man blessed, whom the Lord chasteneth: such, my soul, is the doctrine of God's Word: but O how strange
does

does it found in the ears of this world! whose favourites are ready to conclude themselves ruined, when afflicted. If the body be not well, and all things about them, to please the sense; that is a misery against which they have no defence. Nay, that which they so dread to fall upon themselves, puts them in a fright, but to see it in others. They abhor the afflictions of one under the hand of God, and stand aloof from his sore: like the fearful herd, running away from the wounded deer. Even Christ himself, as a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, they do not much care for acquaintance with him. Upon this account, he was rejected of men; who hid their faces from him. And O when will such come to the wise Moses his choice, Heb. xi. 25. "To suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin?" Is it all their care, to pass smoothly through the present world; and their pride, to escape so easily in this life? but will this serve their turn? and do they think, so to come off always? when Job cries out, the arrows of the Almighty stick in me: and David complains, I am consumed by the blow of thy hand: my soul, "if these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke xxiii. 31. If the Lord so chastens whom he loves: O what will be the portion of them whom he hates! were they not dead in sin; they would quake to hear the rod among the children of God: and if these are beat with rods, expect themselves to be lashed with scorpions. For as fearful a thing as it is, to fall into the hands of God; 'tis yet more fearful, to fall out of his care and discipline: to be left wild and untutored; to out-run the yoke of Christ, and let alone to be filthy still; to lie soaking in all their sins, as vessels of wrath, sitting up for destruction.

O my soul, instead of envying their prosperity, do thou despise their folly; and condole their misery.

fery. And if God will be pleased himself to preach home to my bone and flesh; and teach me the best things in the school of afflictions: if he will so break me of my carnal will, that he may break me of my damning sins: if he will loosen me from this dangerous world, that I may not be condemned with it; and give me all my hell in this life; and by crosses, prepare me for the crown; and through many tribulations, bring me to the kingdom of heaven: what harm then in all this does he do me! nay, how exceeding kind is he to me! and when he does not afflict me willingly; but as oft only as he sees necessity; chastens me for my profit; and makes me a loser one way, that I may gain much more in an infinitely better: then may I not only be patient under his hand; but sweetly acquiesce in his will, and heartily bless his name. For, alas! do not I know, by many a sad experiment, how prone I am, here to set up my rest, and to forget my God and myself; and go all to naught; when all is easy with me, and I have nothing to trouble me? and still to have my own will, what does it, but put me in danger to be my own executioner? O the wounds and bruises that I have had, in the house of my seeming friends! and how often have I come home from the world's highest entertainments, and dearest caresses, by the weeping cross! But have I not perceived the Lord doing me good, even by the apparent evils? and cannot I take up the motto of him, that so well understood himself, when he said, (*perissem ni perissem,*) I had been undone, if I had not been undone? *i. e.* undone indeed, and for ever: if not undone in my own sense, and in the judgment of this world. Such a course I was set upon; directly bent for ruin: and a good hand from heaven came, and hedged up the way, *q.* with briars and thorns before me. And by his terrors and afflictions, the Lord of love startled and took me off.

Again,

Again, in such a supine sluggishness, and wretched carelessness of my duty, I was wrapping up myself, and folding my hands to sleep: and my gracious Father came, and thrust his goad into my side; and by the most merciful kind of severity, roused and quickened me into such a concern and activity, as best becomes, and most behoves me. Now if he visit my transgressions with the rod, and my iniquities with stripes, what does he, but (in mercy and love to thee, my soul,) promote my best interest, according to his own covenant of grace? Here I must not promise myself more than he has promised; nor count the fiery trial strange, of which he has forewarned: but expect my share in that tribulation, which he hath said, all shall have. And O what are all the sufferings of this time, compared with the glory to be revealed in us! One smile of his face, how much more does it than recompense for all the frowns of the world! yea, what heavenly hopes does it give, to be under his fatherly nurture! though it is not every sufferer that is a martyr; nor are all who be born to trouble, the heirs of salvation: there is no certain conclusion of God's favour and heaven, from a suffering state, and troubles upon earth. For many sorrows shall be to the wicked: and fools, because of their transgressions, are afflicted: nor can all their sufferings compound for their sins; as if God were obliged to pay them down everlasting salvation, because they had a hard time, for a while, in the world. Some are incorrigible still, under all the methods; and nothing does good of them; but they are the same, or worse, whatever befalls them; and still makes shift to hold their sin, for all their smart: which indeed is such a doleful condition, as gives a very painful consideration.

Yet it is thy own fault, my soul, if thou do not make thy benefit of every chastisement, which (in

its own tendency, and God's appointment,) is means of grace, and opportunity of improvement. And by making us sick, the Lord goes about to heal us of worse diseases: by making us poor, he would help us to better riches; by throwing us down, raise us up; and by the storms of crosses, drive us out of our sins, away to the haven of our rest. He makes the evils which look most against us, work for good to us; and that which threatened to undo us, the best thing that could have befallen us. To such a happy account do afflictions turn, when God sanctifies the cross to us; and we bend our ear, to hear the rod, and who has appointed it; and apply our care, to answer the ends for which he sends it: even to humble us, and pull down our hearts; and to reform us, and purge away our dross; to make us more meet for the master's use, and more near to the joy of our Lord.

Under afflictions then, my soul, be curious to inquire into the reason; and full of concern, to comply with the design of them: not in such care, to get from under them, as to be bettered by them. See thy Father's love in them: and then do not faint or fume, when tried by them: but submit to his will, believe in his mercy; and still hope for his glory. Call upon him, in thy trouble, for instruction, assistance, support, and comfort under it; and a timely, gracious, and blessed issue out of it. That what was grievous for the time, may prove glorious in the end; and thy light affliction for a moment, work for thee a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**HOUGH I cannot be in love with pain; yet I
 “ desire, O LORD, to love that blessed hand
 “ of thine, which lays it upon me. For thou dost
 “ not

"not afflict without need, nor without designs for
 "my good: thou seest, that I could not do so well,
 "without it; and that it is better for me to endure
 "it; for prevention of worse tribulation, and for
 "the promoting of my everlasting salvation. There-
 "fore, O my Father! I take it to be in faithfulness
 "and mercy from thee: and bless thee for thy wise
 "and gracious care of me. O teach and help me,
 "so to take it, and use it; that I may be improved
 "under it, and afterwards refreshed, with the sweet
 "and happy fruits of it; and may come to give
 "thee thanks and praise, even for the sharp appli-
 "cation; in that future glorious condition, where
 "I shall feel no further trouble; but be easy and
 "joyful for ever. Amen."

MEDITATION XXX.

Of submitting to God's afflicting band.

IS not man born to trouble? and must not even
 good men look for their share; when our Lord
 has told them, in the world you shall have tribula-
 tion? What then I cannot avoid, 'tis my wisdom
 and interest, O my soul, so to arm myself against,
 that I may be able to abide. And not only to put
 on a sturdiness, to bear it, because I must; but to
 take it in good part, because it is the will of God;
 and comes not upon me, as a mere contingent
 thing; but by the direction of his hand: nor spring-
 ing as a brier-bush out of the earth; but sent as a
 messenger from my heavenly Father. And that
 which

which seems good in his sight, shall it look evil in mine? Shall I struggle against that blessed will, which is so much better than my own? No; I will receive it, and embrace it: I will welcome and approve it: if my Lord will be pleased to have it. His will be done upon me; as well as by me. And may I have no will, but what is tuned to a harmonious agreement with his. Though I cannot love the trouble for itself: yet will I bless the hand that sends it; and comfort myself in this belief, that it is not in wrath, but in love: and not to do me hurt; but for my good. Still I will refer myself to him; and seeing it is the Lord, let him do what seems him good. He that rules all the world, cannot be unfit to rule me. That it is his dispensation, shall be my satisfaction. For however he uses me, I am sure, he cannot wrong me. And as bad as it is with me, yet it might have been worse. If it be but better than the torments of hell; it is not so bad as the wages of my sin. And shall I that have done so much more evil than good, receive all good at the hands of God, and no evil? Shall I think it much to be afflicted; when it is of his mercy, that I am not consumed? "O why should a living man complain; a man for the punishment of his sin?" Lam. iii. 39. 'Tis but what I have procured to myself: yea, 'tis but what he inflicts on the children of his love. For the same afflictions are accomplished on the rest of my brethren in the world. Yea, they that are much better, have fared a great deal worse. And wherefore does he send the evil, but to make me better; that so he may love me still more? For certain, he best knows what he has to do: yea, how to make those very afflictions the stairs to my happiness; which look like the violent hands, coming to throw me down into misery. And he does not afflict willingly, for the affliction's sake, as delighting in my misery: but he lays upon me the cross,

to

to save me from the curse; and plucks but those comforts from me, which seduced my heart from him. He understands, how to profit my soul, without pleasing my humour: and will make his medicines healing, though they be not so relishing. He would have me to heaven a nearer way, than I had a mind to go: and will drive me, where I would not be drawn; yea, compel me to come in, where I was for standing it out. That then which is the cause of my present grief, yet will he turn to the matter of my future joy! and make me thrive, even by what I have lost. Should I be still my own carver, O how soon should I be my own destroyer! Let me then rest assured, that 'tis good for me to be afflicted: and if it were otherwise with me, it would be worse for me. He that sends it, knows me to need it. And it is in faithfulness, that he does afflict me; in love to my soul, that he lays the load on my body. Seeing I have experienced his kindness in every condition; I will believe, that I shall also find it in this affliction: and trust the great Captain of my salvation, to bring me, though it be through many tribulations, to his heavenly kingdom. Let but my soul be safe in his hands, and fit for his glory; and then let him, if he please, take the world out of my hands, and do what he will with my body. To resign myself up into his hands, that will make me easy in my mind, and happy under his care. Therefore, that I may not be broken by him, I will bend to him: and though he slay me, yet I will trust in him. I am upon a warfare: and meet is it for the soldier, to make account of sharp service. I am sailing through a troubled sea: and the mariner must not think it strange to be weather-beaten, and hard put to it. Did not my dear Lord himself go before me, in the suffering way? but it was the way to his glory: and shall not I cheerfully follow him, till I reach to
be

be ever with him? O my soul, there is that, which will more than pay me, for all the worst that ever can befall me: and that will soon make me forget all sorrow; as if it had never been upon me. Lord, let not my portion be with the men of the world, that have all their good things in this life: but let me now, as thou wilt, be troubled; that I may be eternally saved. And so do thou break my will here, that I may have my will for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“**A**FFLICTION comes not forth of the dust;
 “nor does trouble spring out of the ground;
 “but it is thy messenger, O Lord, dispatched out
 “upon thy errand. And because it comes from
 “thy hand; I will lay my hand upon my mouth;
 “and neither reply against it; nor repine under it.
 “O give me patience and ability to bear it: that I
 “may not faint, however sore tried; and that
 “none of the losses or crosses may sink my heart,
 “nor ruin my hopes; nor pull me from my God;
 “nor tempt me to fly out into rebellion against the
 “Lord. But still, let me find thy help at hand,
 “and thy mercy, in time of my need; thy staff,
 “to support me; as well as thy rod, to chastise
 “me; thy love to my soul, thy pardon, thy peace,
 “the shining of thy face, and the reviving hopes
 “of thy heavenly glory. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXXI.

Of the danger of worldly prosperity.

PROSPERITY is that glittering sword, which every one has an itch to be handling: but O how few, my soul, can tell how to manage it, without hurting themselves by it? The mountain gives so fair a prospect; that most are for scrambling up, though to their own misfortune: and in the slippery places, seeking higher happiness, do but tumble down into the deeper misery. Indeed, there is no wise man, but the godly man. All the wicked, God's Word paints them out for fools. And then let them never so much applaud their own wisdom, to get up high in the world; none of their prosperity can ever make them happy; but will rather run them into the sadder infelicity. When instead of improving the advantages set before them, the prosperity of fools only destroys them. The lofty standing makes them so giddy, that they know not what to do with themselves in it. And so they fall, *lapsu graviori*: till they are quite undone, by that very thing, which they reckoned would make them for ever. This world's good, instead of doing them any good, O how usually does it make them a great deal the worse for it; loose and riotous, proud and imperious, cruel and indeed unsufferable! when they think their wealth and greatness must bear them out in all; and take their fulness and plenty, as the opportunity for their wantonness and luxury; yea, even their warrant to sin with authority. Thus, in the rank pasture, do they feed those fleshly lusts,
which

which grow up to be the murderers of their souls. There it is, that the snakes lie thick in ambush all about: and they that will lie down among them, and roll carelessly, and sport securely; not so much as fearing them? O how are they like to escape them! There is the temptation in that easy prosperous condition, heightened with such a sort of fascination, as puts even a good man hard to it, to retain his integrity in it. Agur himself was afraid of riches: "lest being full, he should deny God, and say, who is the Lord?" Prov. xxx. 9. And so eminent a saint as David, in his prosperity, was running into that wild folly, to think his mountain stood so strong, he should never be moved. Therefore does the gracious God use to diet his children with a competency: and when he gives them any further allowance than so, yet in all their affluence, he makes them abstemious as pilgrims, that are not to glut themselves upon this world: but to be crucified to it; and keep their appetites, for better entertainments above it. O then how shall the man that is not fortified with God's heavenly grace, to make him strong in the Lord, ever be safe amidst all the snares to catch him on every side! how do the Jesuruns use to kick, as they wax fat; and throw up their heels at their owner and keeper! with what disdain do they look down upon the worship of God, when so, not only bolstered, but courted and caressed by the world! what room then for prayers and holy offices; when so taken up with their great incomes, plodding designs, bon-companions, and variety of pleasures! poor religion must stand by: and the God of heaven wait, till they can have while to be at his service. Or if they will have any thing to do with him; it shall be only in such a way, as to let him see, how much they slight him: and what haste they are in to get away to their only beloved again. Amidst all their fulness, O
how

how is the poor soul starved? and never a one of their dogs, but shall be better fed, and more regarded. They think themselves too well impared already, to look after any other heaven: and have so much of Dives's business upon their hands, they can scarce do a stroke at working out their salvation. Yet if they give not diligence for it, they are like to go without it: Nay, if they do not strive harder than others, because their hindrances are more and greater; how can they enter? therefore when the world cries, O happy men, that can carry all before them! God's holy Word says, woe be to them: and to get into the kingdom of God, makes it the greatest difficulty for them. O my soul! are such men thy envy? and is such a condition thy ambition? I bless his name who has given me mine eyes to see through both: So as to discern the perils of this, and the wretchedness of those. I pity them, to think of the parts they are acting: and I tremble to foresee the judgment, to which they are hastening. The incumbrances of their way, and the tragicalness of their exit, are enough to cure all my admiration of the most flourishing condition. But where I have not so much as they, yet must I beware that it be not enough, to detain me from my God and my duty; and to rob him of my heart and fidelity. For be they never such poor scraps and fragments of the world, that fall to my share: Yet if I make them my treasure, and lay up my heart with them: I am in as much danger then to lose my soul by them, even as if I had gained the whole world: when my portion in it is set up, to rival with the Lord; and has me really, more than he shall have me. These very blessings so preferred and idolized, turn to curses: and better I never had known them; than to commit such whoredom with them.

O my soul, be jealous of the world's kindness, even when it smiles sweetest upon thee: and take heed, lest it draw thee in, with such poor trifles, to plunder thee of far better goods. Suspect and dread the tempter's hooks, under all the specious baits: yea, fear them most, when thou beginnest to like them best. Beg of God to disturb thee out of that ease, which would make thee secure in thy sins; and to embitter those comforts, that allure thee, to fall in love with this world. O desire not health or wealth, or any of the world's good, that would separate and estrange thee from thy God. But rather wish to be stript of all; than it should lie in the way to stop or cool thy pursuit of the good, that is heavenly and everlasting. Watch narrowly, that it do not so inroach and steal upon thee, and make a party in thee; to pin down thy affections to the earth, and incline thee therein to set up thy rest, and count it best to be here. That it may not thus endanger thee, keep it off from gaining any such power over thee, and still reckon that the best condition, be it whatsoever, which makes thee, my soul, most to prosper. That thou mayest not be lean and beggarly; when there's fatness and fulness round about thee. But mayest secure thy part in Christ; be thy part what it will in the world: and let it be never so little, which thou canst boast of here, that thou mayest be safe and happy for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“ **I** Confess my folly, O Lord, to be so eager after
 “ that state, which threatens me with the
 “ greatest danger. O correct this carnal humour;
 “ and make desirous (above all things,) that my
 “ soul may prosper. Preserve me, O my God, from
 “ settling upon my lees; and from forgetting thee,
 “ and

"and myself, when thou sendest prosperous days.
 "O let me not place my felicity in any thing that
 "is earthly; nor envy the worlding's prosperity.
 "But disturb me, Lord, out of that fleshly ease,
 "which would make me secure in my sins. And
 "give me a lowly mind, even in my highest estate.
 "Yea, make me jealous of the world's kindness;
 "when it smiles most upon me. That the blessings
 "and comforts of this life, may not prove snares
 "and curses, destructive to my soul; but incen-
 "tives to the love of thee, my God, and engage-
 "ments upon my heart, to serve thee cheerfully;
 "and to bless thee continually; even all the days
 "of my life. Amen."

MEDITATION XXXII.

Of the unsatisfactoriness of the creatures.

HOWever highly pleased any children of the world
 may shew themselves in their earthly posses-
 sions; and not only contented, but transported,
 with their carnal fruitions: for certain, my soul,
 it is not because there is ought in the things them-
 selves, to give them such satisfaction; but because,
 for the present, they are under a delusion. Mistak-
 ing the creatures to be, what really they are not;
 and will after come to find the dream, and see the
 cheat: that they did but embrace a cloud and fic-
 tion; and shall find nothing in their hands remain-
 ing, to bring in a true satisfaction: but rather,
 what shall contribute to their fore vexation. And
 though the children of God can take up content-
 edly in any condition, for a viaticum, and their
 passage:

passage: yet cannot they set up their rest in the most full and flourishing condition, for their hearts ease and portion. Alas! how can any that understand themselves, expect that from the world, which they are sure the world has not for them? how can the things which are shallow, finite, and perishing, ever answer the cravings of my soul, that is heavenly, infinite, and everlasting! never can it quench its thirst out of broken cisterns; but must get to the fountain of living waters. Bring a wedge of gold, and a lump of clay, to my departing soul: and the one shall signify just as much as the other. Yea, before that time, (which shall open thy eyes widest) my soul, canst thou even at present see any thing in the very best of creatures, to terminate thy wishes? canst thou not look quite through the thin empty glasses; and scorn to take up with such beggarly trifles? though thou canst use the traveller's supplies for thy journey, yet sure thou canst not stay upon them, so as to take thee off the pursuit of that blessed end, which thou hast in thy eye and aim before thee. Canst thou take the poor succours of my frail state here, (even the infirm man's portions, the tossed mariner's short accommodations) for thy home, and thy health; for the matter of thy content, and the sweet center of thy rest? can I think to come after King Solomon, and out-do the man, that raised the worldly happiness to such a height, as I am never like to come near: and which (it may be) never any one else did, or ever can reach? yet has not he told us, that the utmost he could ever make of it all, amounted to no more, than vanity and vexation of spirit? "The eye" (saith he) (that can drink in all beauty and glory,) yet, "is not satisfied with seeing. The ear," (that can devour up all history and harmony, yet) "is not satisfied with hearing," Eccl. i. 8. And therefore wilt thou, my soul, spend thy "money for that
" which

* which is not bread; and thy labour for that "which satisfies not?" Isa. lv. 2. Canst thou live upon air, or blasts of wind? can that which is empty, and void, and waste, (Nah. ii. 10.) ever fulfil thy desire, and give thee enough? if thou dost promise thyself mighty matters from this and the other in the world, it shall even be, but as "when a hungry man dreams, and behold he eateth: but he waketh, and his soul is empty: or, as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinks: but he awakes and is faint, and his soul has appetite," Isa. xxix. 8. O what real goodness canst thou reasonably expect, from such things as the wisdom of God has pronounced, to be vanity itself! here then, see the vacuum in nature, dispersed all over this world: nothing but emptiness of what thou wouldst have, to give thee ease and rest. O what rest for thee, in a restless world? what permanent station, where all is in fluid motion? whatever shews thee the face of satisfaction, upon trial, it proves to be only imposture and frustration. For, alas, all the world can no more satiate the craving, than it can make amends for the loss, of my soul. I may indeed as soon satisfy hunger and thirst, with mold and gall; as my soul with the unsuitable objects of this world's wealth and honour. Yea, could it find any pleasing entertainment here at present; yet how can this soul, that is a forecasting, as well as everlasting creature, be content with any thing that it has, which it is in danger still to lose? nay, will not the thought of parting more torment, than all the now-possessing can delight? though the world kept up in never so good humour towards me: and all the creatures conspired together, to make me as happy as they were able, even for the whole term of life: yet how would this dash all the satisfaction, that this present life is gone in a trice? and then,

my

my soul, if provided no better, in what a case art thou for ever!

Yet, O Lord, what a stir and struggle do men make to gain the world! with what keenness, do they pursue it? with what passion embrace it: as if it must needs crown all their wishes; and they could not chuse but be easy and happy, when so provided? though, alas, that very having it, does so often spoil all the ease and happiness, and nothing but swell them with tumours and tympanies of pride and confidence in their abundance. Who has not vainly promised himself content of mind, could he but compass this and that in the world? O then there he would fix, and covet no more. But when reached to their journey's end; where once he placed the full period of all that he would have; at the top of that mountain, he finds himself yet as far from touching the sky as before: and so begins afresh, and must on again: and unless he can get that, and beyond that, somewhat more; all the rest would do him no good. And thus are men tolled on (*in infinitum*) in an endless circle of vanity, and task impossible: to make new adventures still in the quest of that satisfaction, which it is not in the power of all the creatures to give. But the more they throw on of that fuel; the flame does but rise so much the higher: and that which might be thought to fill the appetite, does only extend and stretch it out, to crave on even infinitely. And so they have their wealth, only as they have a fever, to burn and afflict them. And still the so much desired heart's-ease and soul-rest is as much a stranger to the noble palaces, even as to the poorest cottages.

O my soul, thou art a ray of divinity: there is nothing in thee that is earthly. And shall the sacred flame then, that should still be pointing upward, creep only along the ground; canst thou content

tent thyself to be married to the very sediment of
 God's creation? canst thou imagine that any, or
 all the creatures, can ever give thee satisfaction? no,
 thou hast wider capacities: and art made for nobler
 purposes; so that really none but he that made
 thee, can ever content thee. Therefore, unless thou
 delightest to be perpetually baffled; call in thy ro-
 ving desires, from hunting to and fro about the earth,
 and fix them upon the true, infinite, and everlasting
 good; which thou canst never travel all over, nor
 shalt ever be disappointed in any thing, that there
 thou findest: but still will be making new disco-
 veries, and from every new acquisition, experience
 a new satisfaction. But that thou mayest take the
 only sure way to the Father, do thou embark with
 Christ Jesus; and upon his satisfaction, bottom all
 thy satisfaction. For so sitting down under the sha-
 dow of thy crucified Saviour, there indeed, and
 there alone, thou shalt find ease, and be at rest.

THE PRAYER.

" **O** My GOD! how often have I made fruit-
 " less experiments in seeking rest where
 " none is to be found? the creatures look inviting,
 " and promise great matters, to flatter my imagi-
 " nation, and raise my expectation: yet still they
 " do nothing but delude my hopes, and abuse my
 " soul. And thus I come only to be satisfied, that
 " here I can never be satisfied. So that even my
 " necessity, O Lord, casts me upon thee, who hast
 " me for thyself: and whatever I have without
 " thee, still I shall be restless till I center and fix in
 " thee. And O that all disappointments which I
 " have found, may be sufficient to send me home
 " indeed to thee. Rescue me, I beseech thee, out
 " of all other hands; where I cannot stay, but to
 " my

“ my woful los. And not only shew me the per-
 “ fect fulness of all that I would have with thy
 “ blessed self: But there keep and hold me, so
 “ fatisfied with thee; that I may never depart
 “ from thee. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXXIII.

Of the vanities of the world.

MY soul, thou hast surveyed the world to see how vain it is as to its significancy to give thee any satisfaction. But now let us look upon the impertinence of its children, and the vanity of their conversation. “ Surely, every man walks in “ a vain shew; surely they are disquieted in vain,” Psa. xxxix. 6. Vanity is all their round, and trouble is all they find. They are children indeed that run themselves out of breath after butterflies and feathers; and (*operose nihil agunt, Sen.*) take a great deal of pains to do nothing, only to amuse and weary themselves in whirling about they know not why, and doing they know not what. But make a solemn business of mere trifles, and spend themselves in driving on the concerns that will turn to no account. Thus the plodding miser is even wholly taken up in adding to the heap; lives narrow and pinching in the midst of all his plenty, and when he has got it, dares not use it; but it has him, rather than he has it; and he is a vassal to it; no master of it. And is not that a vain man, to lay out all his care and pains in amassing the good for which he is never the better; but to give him the
 name

name of a wealthy man, and the hungry pleasure to think that he has it by him. Nor is it a jot the better with the prodigal spender; who is as much blinded with his carnal pleasure, and a very slave to his belly and fancy; pouring out all upon his own and others luits, and to purchase the applause of a brave blade; it may be, gets only the portion of a mere beggar. But suppose, he run not himself out of all the world's good; yet does he forfeit all his good sense to bestow so much upon a lump of perishing flesh; and the while to starve his immortal soul. O! how vain is he or she, that looks after the fashion, more than their salvation; and expect others to value them, as much as they value themselves for the finery? though they have little but the garb to recommend them; and are in greater care how they dress and go, than what they are and do. When thus, instead of getting the applause which they desire, they find the censure which they deserve. And alas, the head is not a scruple the wiser, for all that towers so high upon it; or for all that dangles down so long from it. But the heart is still the vainer and the worse, for spending all its thoughts and desires in such a low wretched service; only to contrive fine cases for a living bit of vile dirt. O how vain is the aspiring creature, that is for throwing pelion upon ossa, to mount himself still higher in the world; and thinks he must be so much the better man, when he has purchased the bigger name: which as it does not make the least addition to his outward stature; so neither does it contribute any thing to his inward worth, and wisdom, and goodness. But he is, as he was, still the very same poor crazy mortal: it is well, if not the more proud and sinful. I will not call the great and honourable persons cheats, but one of their own rank that durst make bold with them, has said it, "that men of high degree are not

“only vanity, but a lie,” Pſal. lxxii. 9. Becauſe they bear it out before the world, to be great ſomebodies, which, God knows, they are not; but even juſt the ſame, if ſtrip’d, as the pooreſt beggar. And in truth, my ſoul, what is all the admir’d greatneſs of this world, but a great deluſion! when they that are thought to have all, and able to do all, yet have more the name than the enjoyment of their fulneſs, and can do the leaſt of all for themſelves, and hang the moſt of all upon others; depending upon their very dependents; and cannot keep up their port and parade, without being beholden to the meaneſt of their ſervants; yea, even to ſome of the poor brute creatures; to the living for their ſtrength, and to the dead for their ſkins. And what does this greatneſs, but lay them open as the wider marks, to be hit by the bolts out of fortune’s croſs-bow in the more places? ſo that they are like to find the greateſt trouble, when yet, of all others, they are leaſt able to bear it. And here is the demonſtration of their vanity, to bear themſelves up ſo upon thoſe great things of the world, that can never answer their ends; either to promote their true felicity, or to keep off any miſery. But as they may have moſt uneaſy minds, even in their ſoſteſt circumſtances: ſo are they as liable as any men in the world, even to the worſt of accidents. And that which is called their height of living, what is it really but a low grovelling ſort of life? becauſe it engages them moſt to the earth, and lies even all in that fleſh pleaſing, which brings us neareſt to the brutes. When that indeed is the greateſt man, who has the greateſt command over himſelf, and that lives moſt above this vain wretched world; neareſt allied, and affimilated to God and his glorious angels. What are all the magnificent ſumptuous buildings, the beautifully adorned and richly furniſhed apartments, but the great and fine neſt of a poor little worm?

worm? all the pleasant walks and gardens are, methinks, the most innocent vanities: if there the heart be not set to take root; but from thence takes occasion to mount up to a better paradise, where vanity shall never enter, to make any spoil or disorder. Music also will be the less vain, if used to the same purpose; not as an occasion to the flesh, but to carry away the soul in admiration and desire of the heavenly harmony; not of, but above, the spheres for dancing. But I should be a very sorry advocate, when to me it appears such a vanity all over, that I know not what to say in its excuse, but that some who are wise and serious, do (in compliance otherwise with a prevailing custom,) prevent my speaking what else I should think of it, it seems to carry so much more of the child than the Christian in it, that none sure, who truly makes good the latter denomination can be offended, to hear it numbered among the vanities of the world. And whether one of those, which our baptism obliges us to renounce, I shall leave to others consideration. But O! how vain is the sportsman, the gamester, that makes a business of his play; and plays and trifles with the biggest of all his business! how little does the great one look, in the midst of all the bustle and cry; when not only the horses and the dogs, but the whole posse of the family, must be mustered up, and all the sportive part of the neighbourhood come in, to pursue (as it were for their own lives,) the life of a diminutive contemptible animal, whose skin and flesh will not pay for a thousandth part of the pains and cost; especially, if so much precious time, thrown away, shall come into the reckoning. And they that are all for diversions to drive away that time, which flies so swift, they could never yet keep pace with it. O how soon may they come sadly to wish, for
a few

a few of those hours, to be spent to a much greater and better purpose.

To make use of the creatures mettle and fierceness, in setting and provoking them, to wound, and tear, and kill one another, I should have called a vanity, but that cruelty is much the more proper name. And how any of human kind, that would be thought a good man, (who is said to be merciful even to the poor brutes,) should make this his game and merriment; I must leave to such as know better than myself how to be accountable.

How vain are they that tie up themselves to the laws of visiting, rather according to reputed honour, and a certain custom; than any kind inclination or hearty friendship? and there spend all the time in talking of others, instead of enjoying one another. O! the vanity of prattlers, and such gossips, as do little but talk; and yet scarce a word to any good purpose! O the vanity of those, whose even trade of life is drinking, and playing, laughing, and fooling! as if they had nothing to do in the world but to see and be seen, and hear, and tattle, and please their flesh, and divert themselves like such as lived all in jest, and should never die in earnest: splendid entertainments also, when made more for ostentation, and riot, and luxury; than for the conciliating of friendship, expressing of gratitude, or refreshing such of the poorer sort as want to be encouraged, I must count not only vanities of the age, but the seminaries of vice: where the cost might much better have been spared, and turned to run into another channel; to do good, instead of all the mischief to so many.

After all the vanities of life, my soul, dost thou not see a vanity even in death? when the funeral pomp shall so disguise the grim face, to make it look with a grinning honour; and serve more to publish

With the pride and gallantry of the house, than any real sorrow, or serious concern of the survivors. As if they meant a procession in triumph over death, with flying colours: instead of any memorial of mortality, or humbling of themselves under the stroke of God's hand. And shall I call it a vanity or brutality; when the guests, at the very house of mourning, so forget the solemn occasion; that they come to sponge upon the mourners, and to guzzle, and regale themselves, even just over the corpse: feeding without fear, and giving themselves to eating and drinking, and vain chatting, if not wanton sporting; as those that never lay to heart the reason of their meeting; nor how their own turns are coming?

The vanity of affecting to be pointed at in the world, and to be talked of when dead, is so silly as well as haughty; that it needs but a very little serious thinking, to make any man of sense for ever ashamed to be so concerned. But all these, and such like vanities, my soul, are a wilderness too wide, in which to wander about: yet too rueful, long to stay there. Because it gives such a prospect of the world, as a wild maze, and a great bedlam: and even they that should set the fashion to others, as the most considerable in it, seem to be even the vainest part of it. Yet thou knowest, my soul, how far I am from looking with an invidious eye, upon any of their liberty and gaiety. And if they must have their vanities, let them (for me) take them; and make their most of them. I have many vanities too; which do more incline me to bear with others. But may the blessed Saviour of the world, redeem me still more and more from my vain conversation; as well as from all foul transgression. That I may not run into any way and habit of trifling and impertinence; which I cannot answer to God, or to my own reason and conscience: nor
ever

ever give myself over to such intolerable vanities, as shall make me forget for what I came into the world, and whither I am going, and how I must carry; that I may speed better, where I am to live for ever. O may I not be so vain, as to trust in any thing to bring me to heaven, that shall leave me short of that glorious expectation. But so wisely and warily pass through this disorderly scene of vanity; that I may reach safe at last to the blessed regions of substantial felicity and everlasting glory.

THE PRAYER.

“**L**ORD! what a shadow and pageant is this world; shewing to be what it is not; and promising to do, what it does not? and even the men that complain of its vanity, help to make it more vain. For O! what impertinents are the most, full of concern and action, to effect even nothing? Lord, I have been one of those sons of men, that love vanity: and O! to what little purpose have I lived so long in the world. Pity, I beseech thee, and pardon thy servant, and all my partners in any such vanity, whereof I have been guilty. And engage me now, at the last, to attend and follow the business of life; and make me earnest about the work of him that sent me: that giving my mind and myself, to secure a better world, I may shortly pass from these shadows to the substance; and leave this world, whose fashion passeth away, for that which shall abide in the greatest reality, and the richest glory, for evermore. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXXIV.

Of the brevity of this life.

HOW short-lived are all the things of this world! and O how unworthy thy love, my soul? because so extremely inadequate to thy everlasting duration; and cannot follow thee into the future condition; nor then stick to thee, when thou art departing away from hence, and beginning to be, what thou must be for ever. O what a blaze is honour, that makes a mighty flash, and is presently all extinct! what a spurt is pleasure, that no sooner than we feel it, we lose it! what a flower, beauty, that has just time to open and show itself: and then shuts up, and withers away! yea, riches themselves, which men call their substance, yet what mountains of snow are they, that soon dissolve, and run away from their hoarders! nay, this world itself, what a shew, a pageant; whose fashion passes away! our life which is the substratum, whereupon all its enjoyments bear up to our perception, it is the vainest thing of all. And verily, every man living, is not only vain, but vanity. The briefest things in nature, this life has for its emblems. A flying shadow, a running post, a sudden race, a quick shuttle, a swift arrow, a violent blast, a swelling bubble, a vapour that appears a little, and then vanisheth, are the usual similes, by which it is deciphered. How little do some survive their very birth? what a quick dispatch do others find, even in their full strength? And they that hold out to the utmost period of threescore and ten, or four-score

score years, yet it is said, soon to be "cut off and fly away," Psal. xc. 10. We talk of long life, when, alas, there is no such thing, but only by comparison, with theirs that are shorter. For even threescore and ten hundred, or fourscore thousand years, are but (a *re' rû,*) an indivisible point, and as just nothing, in respect of the days of eternity, that shall never have an end.

Our Lord has told us, surely I come quickly: the end of all things is at hand: and the judge is at the door. Time is short, even in its whole compass: but as a little shred, torn from duration infinite. But O how short is man's particular time here? and what quick work does death come and make with many; even in the midst, or before the midst of that little time! the glass is soon run; and the candle soon burnt out of itself: but O how easy may the glass be broke and the candle puffed out, before half run, or burnt! so quickly may we all look round about ourselves; to see how we are but of yesterday: and within a few days will be no more seen. Yet, Lord! what stupidity here do men betray, in fancying a boundless prospect before them! as if the poor inch of time would never be measured; nor their short part on the present stage ever be acted. Even the oldest and the weakest, how can they sooth up themselves, with living a while longer, and a while longer yet, without any peremptory date; and scarce know how to conceive themselves cashiered, and rid out of the way? but having heard so much, and so often of death; and finding it still to keep off, they have even left off to look for it. But will the putting it off, or ceasing to expect it, make it ever the further distant! no; the vessel sailing down the swift current, makes its way apace; whether the passengers observe and mind it, or not. And down the rapid stream of time are we hasting: where, O how soon shall we touch

touch the river mouth, and strike through the gulph of death, into the boundless ocean of our endless condition; though we may be nothing so apprehensive of it, as we ought! but, O my soul, remember how short thy time here is: and how quickly all that thou hast to do in this world, will be quite over. Yea, remember, wherefore thou hast thy time now, but to fit up thyself for the everlasting state to come: and then be not so intent for the present moment, as to forget or neglect the future eternity: nor think it enough to have an easy pleasant time, for so little a while: but above all, concern thyself, how it shall fare with thee world without end. And when, as curt as it is, yet this time is the only time, that ever thou shalt have, to do the greatest work, that is to be done in this world: O be choice, and covetous, to make the most that ever thou canst of that little time. And never let it be idle or sinned away, in vain impertinencies, which will turn to no account: or in wicked extravagancies, which will turn to a sad one. Thou hast no time to spare, for such trifling or vicious purposes: when it is all of it little enough, to redeem, for the working out of thy salvation: that thou mayest not be dreadfully surpris'd, and caught wofully unprovided.

Thou hast but a short working time: and O how soon will all the trouble of thy work be over! it is but to bestir thee, and be busy a little while; and yet a little while more: and then thou shalt sit down and take thy ease, and enjoy thy pleasure for ever. The labour will be at an end: but the reward shall never be at an end. O let this then, my soul, be the use that I make of my short time, to be more wary how I spend it; because all hangs upon it: little to regard those pleasures or troubles here, which are but for a moment: and to be all upon it, in laying up for the time to come; and making sure of a blessed share, in that most important state;

which is of a length not to be measured; and of a date that will never be expired.

THE PRAYER.

“**L**ORD! what is man, that thou takest
 “ knowledge of him, or the son of man,
 “ that thou makest account of him? Man is like
 “ to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth
 “ away. O how soon will my part here be done.
 “ And how soon shall I be taken away from hence,
 “ and have no more to do in this world? I know
 “ not the day nor the hour: but even when I least
 “ think of it, how suddenly may I be cut off, and
 “ fly away into the state whence I shall not return!
 “ O Lord, in mercy rouse my stupid soul, into a
 “ serious mindfulness of it, and an affectionate con-
 “ cernment about it: that I may still live, as ex-
 “ pecting to die; and during this short life, may
 “ make sure of that, which shall never be con-
 “ cluded by any more death. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXXV.

Of the certainty of dying.

O My soul, as sure as I do now live, I shall come to the end of this life. For there is no immortality upon earth: but it is appointed unto all men once to die: and what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death! who, without a miracle, can be exempted from that common law of mortality, which determines the whole kind to undergo a change and translation into another condition?

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He that saith, **BEHOLD, I COME**, will come. We may build upon it: for he never breaks his word. Yea, we have not only the sentence of his word; but the constant experience of all the world, to vouch for it, and to confirm us in it. For do not we see, that all sorts, one with another, from the lowest to the highest in this world, after they have had their appointed time, reach to their end; and go off from hence to be seen here no more? the strongest cannot always hold out. The richest are not able to make a bribe for death. The wisest know not how to shift it off. But this great leveller will throw all equal in the dust, and send them down, to take their turns, after the rest: yea, drop them through his trap-door, into another world; to take their portion of an infinite duration. Now that which is the end of all men, the living shall (he should) lay it to his heart. And would he not be thought strangely absurd, who would flatter himself with hopes of escaping the hands of death? yet, ah Lord! how do vain men live on, as if they did not at all believe that they shall die! though they cannot for shame own it: yet the conduct of their life aims at nothing, but the perpetuating themselves upon earth: as if they, and their enjoyments should abide here for ever; and they thought of no departure hence. When as all their sollicitude is for the present world: and nothing further from their thoughts, than the dying day. Yea when they can live so ungodly here, as if they were never to answer for it elsewhere.

But, my soul, shall I be such a brute; and shew no more wisdom, to understand and consider my latter end? O let me make sure account of it; and also make better provision for it. Let me thus reason the case, to affect myself with it; must I, even I, go the way of all flesh, after the innumerable company, of my kind, that are already gone
before

before me. Must I, ere long, for certain be out of all here; and this world will hold me no longer; my place in it will no more be found. Let me be never so healthy, and lusty, and full of life; will this last with me always? must there not be an end? is not my period set; the bounds fixed, that I cannot pass? and shall I then go and settle myself here, in the house of my pilgrimage; as if I were at home already: without thinking of a removal? when the Lord knows, that I am but upon my journey, to the place of my everlasting settlement; and this world is none of my rest; but my passage; and a mere thoroughfare, to the next. O then how should I live, but as a dying man; with an eye and regard still to my approaching dissolution, and the ensuing condition? What is my business, but to wait for the coming of my Lord; who a while hence, will most certainly be with me: and to prepare for the mighty change, which must then pass upon me? O how full of concern should I be, to do that well, which is to be done once for all; and upon the doing it aright, depends all my ease and welfare for ever! my soul, thou must be roused and unhoused, of thy present habitation: that weak building will all be thrown down: and thou must go naked away, to seek another dwelling. O then look to thyself: and mind nothing in this world so much, as to get safe and well out of it: and to secure thy everlasting effects beyond it; and thy happy share in that glorious life, which shall never be ended by any more death. That seeing I must die once, it may be but once: and the second death may have no power upon me: but as certain as is my death here, I may be as certain to live blessedly for ever hereafter.

THE PRAYER.

“**M**Y life, so short, is not only like, but sure,
 “to have an end. And I not only may,
 “but must die. And though I may seem to know
 “this well enough; yet, it will not be enough;
 “except thou, Lord, do teach me, with the wisdom
 “from above. O make thou me to know my end.
 “And then I shall know it, in another, and more
 “effectual manner; not only so as to be sure of it;
 “but to take suitable care about it; and make suf-
 “ficient provision for it. O teach me so to num-
 “ber my days, that I may wisely foresee my last
 “day, and lay up against the evil day. And as I
 “am sure of my death and dissolution; so help me
 “to make sure my calling and election: that I may
 “welcome my dying day, and find it prove the
 “period of my grief, and the beginning of such
 “joys, as shall last world without end. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXXVI.

Of the uncertain time of our death.

O My soul, what an uncertain world is it that
 I live in? a world still ringing changes; and
 constant only in its own inconstancy. Where all
 things are moving and flitting; and nothing we
 have the present hold of, that we can put any trust
 in; or promise ourselves any continued satisfaction
 from. But what now raises our high expectation;
 how

how soon does it turn to the matter of our fore vexation! and as well may we look for certainty from wind or weather, as from any thing this world has wherewith to flatter us, or that it can secure to us. For even when it seems to have set us on the safest terms; yet so far are we from sure footing, and so slippery still is our standing, that we know not what a day may bring forth, to turn us out of all.

But amidst all the uncertainties of the world, O my soul, what more uncertain than my own life? which I hold upon such precarious conditions, that he who lent it may, whenever he pleases, without a minute's warning recal it. No lease have I of it, for years, or days: no assurance, so much as for an hour. And what do I know, but this night my soul may be required of me? or how can I tell, but the next sun may rise, to light me down to the chambers of death? do not I see, how soon even the healthiest and strongest are pulled down, and cut off? and be my constitution never so firm and robust; there are the boisterous distempers, and such harbingers of death, as will not be baffled, by any ability of body: but seem to glory in meeting with such a match. And finding me the abler, will but handle me the rougher, and dispatch me the sooner. Has not our Lord said, that he comes as a thief; and at such an hour as we think not? At midnight, (the usual time of dead sleep;) there was "a cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," Matth. xxv. 6. O how many are surpris'd with it, like men catch'd asleep; to wake in another world? "It shall come to pass, in that day, saith the Lord God," Amos viii. 9. "that I will cause the sun to go down at noon; and will darken the earth in the clear day." Thus does the sun of our present life often set, as soon as it touches the meridian; and O how often before that? who then has ever a
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not the better security or defence, to set death at defiance; because they are youthful, or heal, and in outward appearance, like to stretch out their life to the utmost extent possible? when, alas, the flourishing youngster, the man of might, may sooner be gone, than the old crazy wretch, that has long been thought to have one foot in the grave. Nay, though I escape the dashes, and violent brushes; yet (*repat non intellecta senectus* :) the age and infirmities that carry me hence come stealing on, by such unperceivable advances, that death may be just at my heels, even when I am fancying it far off, at the greatest distance.

Now consider it, my soul, why does the Lord leave the time of death, to me so uncertain? is it to catch me at disadvantages, and take me at the worst? no, but to keep me in his holy fear, from the sin, that is more deadly than death: to make my life better; and so, my accounts easier; and all the likelier and hopefuller with me, for comfort and glory hereafter. For he that is ever looking for his judge, will sure take care to keep in a posture fit to appear before him. Therefore is not my Lord hard with me; but kind to me: when he acquaints me not with the certain season of his coming: that still I may employ myself so well, as one who ever expects him. And how does it lie upon thee, my soul, to be watchful, and stand upon thy guard; scouting out thy thoughts to discover the approaches of the last enemy; that thou mayest prevent the horrible surprise; and not be taken at unawares, in a sorrowful unprovided case? watch ye therefore, and pray always, saith our blessed Lord. Never indulge to security; nor slack thy prayers to the God, in whose hands are thy times: that he would teach thee so to number thy days, that thou mayest apply thy heart to wisdom: and mayest remember thyself better, and order thy affairs

fairs wiser; than to hang the weightiest of all concerns, upon the greatest uncertainties; presuming of those futurities and opportunities, which the odds is much against me, whether I shall ever live to see. When I am sure of death, but sure of no time beyond the present, to provide for it: O may not I harden my heart; nor refuse to hear the Lord's voice to-day: but so husband and improve the seasons, which now I have in my hands; and keep always in a readiness, that I may not find a doleful meeting with my Lord; come when he will: but with hope and cheerfulness may give up my soul to him, and with courage and comfort, and the greatest gladness and rejoicing, appear before him.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**HOU hast acquainted us, O Lord, that thou
 “ comest as a thief; and pronounced him
 “ blessed that watcheth, and keepeth his garments,
 “ that he discover not his nakedness and shame.
 “ O make me watchful against the enemies of my
 “ soul; and full of care, in waiting and preparing
 “ for the coming of my Lord. Let me not put off
 “ my present duty, in presumption of a future opportunity; which I do not know, whether I
 “ shall live to see; or shall have the grace and
 “ will to use it, if I do not reach to it. But quicken and hasten me to do all that is needful to be
 “ done, while I have time for it, and that day,
 “ which, with so many, is past already, yet shining
 “ upon me. And so keep me still in a readiness,
 “ to meet the blessed Bridegroom of my soul; that
 “ at what time soever that thou shalt come, to call
 “ me away, I may not appear before thee with confusion, and sorrow; but with confidence and rejoicing. Amen.”

MEDITATION XXXVII.

Of the warnings of death.

WHAT particular immediate warning some may have of their dissolution approaching, I cannot tell. But many notices more remote, and general summons there are, which I see lie in common to all the world. The changes and death so frequent among our neighbours, and the decays and ailments prevailing upon our own bodies; what are they, my soul, but certain prognostics to tell us, it cannot be far from us; and we know not how near to us? when death is not only preached, but itself even preaches to us; in all the havock that it makes before us: is this nothing to us? does it not come close, to touch and concern us? when I am not only told from heaven, dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return; but I have often observed it exemplified on earth, in the multitudes, (more than I am able to remember,) that I have known dead and gone: and I cannot look into a church or churchyard, but the graves so thick there, are all silent monitors, to acquaint and assure me, what shall also become of me. O my soul, is not this warning upon warning, from abroad! to bid me remember, how nicely I stand; and how certainly I shall fall: and follow them that have led me the way; and find their very case to be my own? nay, when I have the remembrances within, as well as without me; the declensions and infirmities of my flesh, dimness of sight, deafness of hearing, rottenness of teeth, feebleness of limbs, stiffness of joints,

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weakness and languor all over : this comes home to me indeed, to make me see myself wasting, and even dying away : till I am come even within the verge and territories of death ; and almost free already among the dead. Now shall not I take this as a sufficient warning ? when I do not only hear, but see, yea and feel, the warning ? and being so fore-warned, if I am not also fore-armed ; it will be my foul shame and confusion, yea, my inexcusable fault and condemnation.

O my foul, shall I be like the beasts, feeding in a pasture ; that when the butcher comes, and fetches away one after another for the slaughter ; they still eat on, and play, and please themselves, and never regard the matter ? and when it comes to my very bone and flesh ; and the messengers of death have made an entry, and seizure upon me ; and got the prepossession of me : O what should I have to say for myself ; if after all, I should be taken tardy, and found at the last unready ? if I should take no warning, nor be startled from wilful sinning ; but run on in a dangerous course of wicked living ? “ Noah, being warned of God, moved with fear prepared an ark, to the saving his house,” Heb. xi. 7. O do thou imitate that great example, my soul ; and let the warnings of God have this influence upon thee ; to quicken thy care, and engage thy endeavours, in making such preparation, that thou mayest escape the destruction, and see the joy of his salvation. O seek out for shelter ; and that in a better righteousness than thy own. Get by faith into the ark of Christ’s righteousness : and there set up thy rest : and let that be all thy trust. That in the floods of great water, thou mayest ride secure, and surmount the danger : and though tossed and threatened, not be overthrown and worsted ; but safe and happy for ever ; under the covert and protection of a SAVIOUR, the LORD thy strength, and thy Redeemer.

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THE PRAYER.

“ **O** My gracious God! thou art pleased to give
 “ me many monitors and remembrances
 “ abroad in the world; and also at home, in my
 “ own frail fabric; to acquaint and warn me, of
 “ my approaching dissolution; that I must go short-
 “ ly down to the chambers of death, and be here
 “ no more seen; what has befallen so many, in my
 “ circumstances already, gives me loud alarms, to
 “ consider, that my turn is coming; when I shall
 “ go after them; and lie by in the grave, as they
 “ do; and be taken up elsewhere, as they are. O
 “ good Lord! awaken my reason, and engage my
 “ serious animadversion; that I may not only have,
 “ but take the warnings, and prevent the surprise,
 “ and escape the danger; and be ready, at thy call,
 “ and meet to enter into thy kingdom, and to live
 “ for ever in the love and joy of my Lord.
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

Of death, as the object of fear.

SOME have I heard talk with such boldness and
 assurance, as if they would out-vapour death,
 and set him at defiance: crying, They fear him
 not; come when he will. They are ready for him.
 And thus may they think to commend their va-
 lour, and die in bravery: but when it comes to be
 tried,

tried, O how soon will such kind of courage be cooled; and leave them confounded? for what a vast difference is there, my soul, between fool-hardiness, and Christian courage? and it is not only, how confident men are: but what reason they have for it. It is one thing to die secure and careless; and quite another thing, to depart in peace, and die in the Lord. They that have not first been changed by grace, will find the saddest change that ever befel them, in their death. Let them now put what face they will upon it; and think they have done enough, if they can but persuade the world, that they are undaunted: many a tender Christian, that is exercised with modest distrusts of himself, and humble fears of his case, may give a sweeter (I am sure, a safer,) welcome to death; than such who have no stronger batteries against it, but their stout looks, and big words. Such an enemy as the king of terrors, a conqueror that has trodden down all the mightiest forces, is not to be slighted and hector'd, by pitiful sinners. But till grace and holiness are more to be seen in them, fear and trembling would much better become them. They that have done so evil, have cause to be afraid. And death may not only strike terror into the man of pleasure; and strike the very heart of the unrenov'd sinner: but it is indeed formidable still, even to many of their betters: as it is the dire effect of sin; shewing the havock that it makes, and the ruin that it brings, upon the world: and as it dissolves the very frame of nature, gives such a shock and concussion to our whole man, and tears the two parts of us asunder: turns the fairest beauty into a rueful picture: and makes the remains even of our sweetest friend, a heap of stench, not to be endured above ground: yea, will also pluck us away from all that ever we love and value in the world. And it is well, if it be indeed the last enemy: for
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to all ungodly men, out of Christ, it is not; but the beginning of their endless sorrows. Yea, it has a dreadfulneſs in it, even to them that are above the danger of being undone by it: and revives ſomewhat of the ſpirit of bondage in them; after all that their mighty Deliverer has done for them. Often it ſtartles their faith, and chills their love, and flatters their praifes: like a lion in the way to their better country; and an ugly porter to the heavenly city.

Here then, my ſoul, do not diſſemble thy fear: but rather inquire after the right and only way of cure. It is the death of thy Saviour, that alone can give thee a comfortable remedy, againſt this fearing the death of thy body. Becauſe he has not only, through that vale of death, tracked out the way to the regions of a better life: but by his own precious death, has made a perfect ſatisfaction for thoſe our ſins, which rendered death indeed deadly to us: and alſo deſtroyed the devil, that had the power of death; in killing that enmity, which gave him all the advantage over us. O ſee then to thy intereſt in this Lord Redeemer. For being in him, there is no condemnation to thee: and the death that kills thy body, cannot then touch thee; but only to releaſe thee, out of thy priſon, into thy own country, the kingdom of glory: and will alſo make that fleſhy part, which has the worſt of it now, the better for ever. O then conquer thy fears, by thy faith in him, that has conquered thy foes. And though thou canſt not be in love with corruption, nor be fond of a diſſolution; for any thing deſirable that is in it: yet looking unto JESUS, thou mayeſt deſire it, for that which is beyond it: and fear no evil, in paſſing through this gloomy vale: when it is to be with him, which is far better. Though ſtill thou art afraid, becauſe of thy remaining ſins: (for ſin and fear are fit companions
to

to dwell together :) yet dost thou not know how so far to disarm death of its sting, that thy hopes may be bigger than thy fears; and bear thee up, from sinking into desperation, though not yet clear from all transgression? and how is that, my soul, but by thy justification; which takes away its guilt and condemnation? and by thy sanctification, that delivers thee from its love and dominion? O plead the infinite merits, and full satisfaction of thy blessed Saviour; for the discharge of every penitent, believing sinner. And where thou canst not, (out of thy own stock,) pay for any one sin: yet depend upon what he has done and endured, to pay, even to the utmost, for all.

But then, let not sin reign in the mortal body; lest it justify the fear of a worse death, so to come upon the immortal soul. For if it do not reign, it shall not ruin. Where it has but a bare being, it will not be damning. O then be afraid of sinning; that thou mayest not be afraid of dying. Resist temptations, and pray for power against them: and then, though thou canst not quite get clear of them; yet thou needest not fear to be undone by them. Yea, to give the deadly stroke to the sins, that foment thy fears; so give thyself to the love of God, that thou mayest utterly distaste all the pleasures of sin; and count nothing sweet, but what pleases thy beloved. And then such a relish of things holy and heavenly, will give thee some anticipation of heaven in thyself already, and give the feelings of such a life, as thou needest not fear ever to kill. For that spiritual life shall not in the least be impaired, but perfected, by the natural death. And then, instead of dreading it, as a foe: thou mayest expect it, to do the kind office of a friend: and mayest begin somewhat of that triumph aforehand, O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? welcome that, which will

will extirpate the very root of sin; and bring me to my dearest Lord: and put an end to all my fears; and give a beginning to my never-ending joys.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** LORD! I know that thou wilt bring me
“ to death, and to the house appointed for
“ all living. And thou knowest all my fears, and
“ the horror that seizes my soul, to think, with
“ serious consideration, of my dissolution. I must
“ not dissemble my dread, but shew before thee my
“ trouble, that I am to encounter the formidable
“ foe, whom there is no withstanding; but he will
“ throw me down, and have away my life; yea,
“ turn me to rottenness and dust. Yet, I bless thy
“ thy name, O Lord, that I have hope mingled
“ with my fears, hope in death itself, that even
“ when so cast down, I shall not be destroyed. O
“ my Saviour! thou art all my hope: And what
“ time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. For thou
“ wilt redeem my life from destruction; and
“ though I fall, wilt not suffer me to lie by it: but
“ raise me up in a better life, above all the power
“ of death. Yea, thou hast taken out the sting of
“ death; by atoning for that sin, which gives it
“ all its malignant influence; to make it indeed
“ most frightful and deadly. And by the strangest
“ way of conquest, (even in dying thyself,) thou
“ hast destroyed, not only death, but a worse ene-
“ my, that had the power of it in his hands. O
“ Lord, my life! Give me life to kill my lusts, to
“ make me alive unto God, and full of life in thy
“ holy ways: and then I will depart in peace, and
“ not

“ not fear death itself, to separate me from
 “ love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION XXXIX.

Of the one thing needful.

O My soul, how many things are counted needful in this world, that are not so in the service of God's Word? as to the rich and great, health and easy, fine and fashionable, well-bred and learned; and to have this and the other superfluity of the body, and for the life that now is. In all which things a man may be deficient and wanting; and yet do very well, and be for ever happy. But “ONE THING IS NEEDFUL,” Luke x. 42. And this one thing is a mighty comprehensive thing: which I must not make light of, because it is called the ONE; crying, it is only so and so; and what need all this ado? as if it were the easiest thing in the world, to get in at the gate of life; which yet our Lord himself has told us, many shall seek to enter and shall not be able. For this one thing takes the whole of our duty to God and man: and it is not only to polish our conversation before the world, but to approve our very hearts to the Lord. It is the care of the soul, and of the service of God; or, such a serious practical religion, as consists in studying and doing the will of him that sent us into the world. And this do I know to be a thing most needful: because it is the very end of our creation. And to keep a clutter about other matters
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ers, without minding to serve the purposes for which my great Maker and Owner designed me. O what is it, but to live eccentric and rebellious, and to make my whole life but a grand impertinence? it is also needful, sure, that I should be honest, and faithful, in discharging my most solemn obligation; and not, after I have devoted and given up myself to the Lord, carry as if I were wholly at my own disposal; and only to fulfil my own pleasure. It is yet further needful, to escape the dreadful doom of the slothful servant: and so to work out my own salvation; that I may escape everlasting damnation. And finally, it is needful, for making my entrance into heaven, and bringing me to enjoy all the happiness there, that ever I desire. For no blessed resting from my labours; if first I do not labour to enter into God's rest. Eternal life is only for them, "who by patient continuance in well-doing, do seek for it," Rom. ii. 7. God's holy habitation, is for the followers after holiness: and the saints inheritance in light, for them, who by a saint-like disposition and conversation, are made meet for it. To live righteously then, and soberly, and godly, is no matter of indifference; but of absolute necessity. It is the main thing, and even all in all. So does God only wise, in the whole tenor of his Word, assure us. And herein all the generation of his children (who have various sentiments, as to some other matters) unanimously do center, and are perfectly agreed. Nay, even the worst of men, that never so much neglect it themselves, and whose lusts carry them quite another way, yet cannot for shame, but own this to be the most material point of all. Yea, their actions, as well as words, come in at last, and bear witness to this truth. When they see, that they are just going off the present stage, and this world will hold them no longer; then they begin to cry out of their ne-

glect, and to bustle about the hopeless work; to retrieve things, which they have let run even past remedy. Then it is, Men and brethren, what shall we do? and all upon it then they seem, if possible, to accomplish the work of their salvation. They who stood idle, or found them somewhat else to do, when it was day with them, would do all, when the night is so upon them, that they can do little or nothing. And O what good then will it do any man; or what will it signify to make him a blessed man; how expert and busy soever he has been about other things; if he neglect this one thing, which is the chief of all!

What though I have been an active man, a careful man, an useful man, a skilful man in worldly business; and one that have bestirred me in my generation, to bring great things to pass: if all this while, I have been a slighty man about the work of God: if that ONE THING NEEDFUL has been none of the thing, which my concern and diligence has been seen in: if my head, and heart, and hands, have been busied about somewhat else, to leave no room for the grand matter of all: I might even as well have stood all the day idle, or folded my hands to sleep, and turned it all to night. For, alas, what will all my labouring for the meat that perisheth, avail to bring me to everlasting life? O then, my soul, how great a part of the world do make a mighty business of nothing? and the ONE THING NEEDFUL, what is it with them, but even as nothing? the trade they should be driving on above, is at a full stand with them: and all their time and application thought too little for the concerns here below. So do impertinents wear out themselves in the chase of vanity: and when they come to die, find nothing in their hands. They make a continual pother about that, which will never pay them for their pains; nor turn to any account but of sorrow.

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row. And in all the haste and hurry, they drop the weightiest affair of everlasting consequence. O wretched creatures! that love to have the world's employments in their way, for their souls impediments: because it is their life, to be so deep in the world: and the heavenly business is death to them. Every thing shall take place of their souls; and be attended before them. So vile in their eyes, are the precious souls; and the only part about them, that they count below their serious care. And then, Lord, to what end is all their stirring so much; when the most important interest of all is least regarded!

O my soul, what have I to do in this world, but to make ready for the next? this is the great business of all. And whatever entrenches upon this, I must not stand pleading for it: but (as a snare) live in dread of it. That my zeal for religion, and my moderation towards the world, may be known to all men: that little things may sit low in my thoughts; and what concerns my soul, being the most weighty, may be minded accordingly. I cannot but justify (in my thoughts) *the children of Wisdom*, that sell all to purchase the pearl of greatest price; and care not, to lose the world, if they can but secure their souls. And they that now call them fools for so doing, will once condemn themselves, for the fools indeed, that they had not done like them.

Though I will not be hasty in my censures of such as seem to have many superfluous things, more for the garnishing of life, and the gaiety of conversation, than for any necessity in the case: nor to condemn all for worldlings, whom I see diligent in the worldly business; yet when I am so well provided myself with this ONE THING NEEDED, I will not envy any, for whatever things else I am destitute of. Seeing I have enough, if I have but that which
will

will bring me to heaven, and make me most happy for ever. This ONE THING shall be infinitely more to me, than all things of theirs put together; and do that really for me, which the famed money was said to do; that is, answer all things. For in securing this, I do make sure of all. And this is the highest commendation of any one living or dead; that he chose the good part, looked to the main, and was all for the only needful thing. This is the sticking comfort, that will stay us, when the world forsakes us: and death itself cannot take it from us. To make the right choice, is as much as my soul is worth: and how I stand affected and addicted now, that is like to determine my condition for ever. O then let me mind that which is truly the main chance: and never forget, never neglect the thing which is all in all. But here be resolute and intent upon it (*hoc agere*;) that no person or concern may take me off. It is my life and my bliss. I must, and I will do it: whatever else be left undone. There is such a necessity in the case, as is indeed indispensable. Many other things, about which men keep so much ado, will never go with them to heaven: it is well, if they do not help to stop them out. But a serious religion, and godly conversation is most necessary to salvation. And that will hold out to do me good for ever: when all else is gone, as if it had never been. I will make all the things of this world then, truckle to the things of God. And it is not so much the way of thriving or flesh-pleasing, that I am to enquire after, as what is soul-saving. This concerns me most of all. And therefore I will make every thing know its distance, till the one thing needful be dispatched. I cannot have while to be idle; or to intermeddle with others matters, where I have nothing to do. No; I have business enough to take me up at home. And the care of my soul will not give me leisure
or

or leave, to be so vain and impertinent. Ah, Lord! what will all the world signify to me, if I lose my own soul! and the greatest business in the world will never be my excuse, to flight and slip over that which is of the highest importance, and extreme necessity. It shall not then, be so much my concern, to be a rich man, a noted man, a politic or plausible man, a man of business, a man of pleasure, a man of address; as to be a godly man, an upright man, an orderly religious man, a man fearing God, and eschewing evil; a man that, in the greatest earnest, minds the way to heaven, with my face still thitherward; and little regarding what I lose or suffer in the world, so that I can but secure the eternal salvation of my soul.

THE PRAYER.

“**L**ORD! what have I to do in this world,
 “but to get safe and well out of it; and to
 “prepare for the everlasting state beyond it? this
 “is the one thing needful, that calls for all my
 “care, and zeal, and diligence. And the whole
 “world will be utterly insignificant to me, if I se-
 “cure not the eternal salvation of my soul: if I
 “let slip the only time, on which depends all that
 “ever concerns me, in the infinite duration fol-
 “lowing; and do not dispatch the great work, for
 “which thou didst send me here, before thou call
 “me away from hence. O that I may not trifle,
 “in that which is of the highest necessity! but
 “whatever else I forget or neglect; good God, I
 “pray thee, quicken and enable me to accomplish
 “the great business of life; and so to acquit my-
 “self, and act my part on the present stage, that
 “when I shall go off, thou mayest say to me, Well
 “done; and receive me into the joy of my Lord.
 “Amen.”

MEDITATION XL.

Of not delaying the work of salvation.

AMONG all the sorts of careless and ungodly sinners, I cannot think there are any come to the peremptory resolution, never to be better: but that all have some secret reserves and meanings, to turn and amend, some time or other. Yet, O my soul, how seldom do these purposes for the future reach their accomplishment? And what they think of doing hereafter, alas, how commonly are they laid in the graves, before it be done? O let me then consider the wickedness, the folly, and the danger, of such delaying the great and needful work. When God commands all men, now to repent, Acts xvii. 31. and to hear his voice to-day: 'tis wicked to disobey him; to reset a declared traitor, his enemy; and to continue in sin, though it be with a purpose, once to leave it: however that thought may seem pious, 'tis indeed rebellious. And the delays are dishonest, to shift off our creditor; because we have no mind to pay him. Yea, the late repentance carries suspicion, to have little or no truth in it. And when it is so shifted off, 'tis usually taken up but for a shift. And such as are so dilatory, would not at all be concerned in it; if they could tell how to avoid it.

But, O how foolish is it, to trust all to uncertain futurities: as if we had the command of time; and could order the sun, to stand still, or death to hold his hand, till we were ready? O what should
I talk

c of hereafter ; when I am not sure of another when I know not, but this night my soul be required of me ? how many younger and r than myself, do I often see cut off in a very time ? And how many now may be past all s for ever, who hoped and reckoned sure gh, to have all well, ere they died ? O what ld the little circumscribed creature, determine ch portions of time, as may be so far beyond wn limits ?

nd what hazards, my soul, do I run, in neglect- he present time ? Not only, because I have no ance of any other ; and if I wait, with Felix, more convenient season, it may never come : ilso, because the longer I defer, it is like to be he worse with me : and the further I run out, nore ado shall I have, to retrieve myself. The is which I now enjoy, I may not find them prostituted to such contempt and scorn : and ld that time, which is in God's hand, and not ine, be continued : yet how do I know, that I meet with the needful repentance expected ? God that gives it : and it is but a peradven- that he will give it, to such as put it from ; when he gave them space for it. In the of trouble, when I reckon to make all even, ead may turn, rather than my heart ; and the nper utterly unfit me for any such kind of bu- . My strength may be gone, or grace with- and the Spirit departed, and God provoked ve me up to a reprobate sense, and my heart ne as cold, and hard, and dead, as a stone. what then will become of all my reckoning, to very thing right and straight at such a time ? y soul, now I have space to repent, and day- to do my work : but the night is drawing on ; when no man can work. Now I have fair rtunities and offers : and if I turn, and give
up

up myself to the Lord, every thing looking hopeful upon me, and sure on my side. But how can I tell, what a little while this will last with me? Shall I then madly prolong the time, till all these inviting advantages will be out of my hands; and I shall be good for nothing, but to groan under my burden, and study relief against my disease? If I find somewhat now in the way to hinder; O may not I have more and worse hindrances then? And if I cannot pluck up the lesser sprig: what shall I do by it, when it is grown to a mighty tree? What do all these delays, but give the enemy still more advantage over me; and treasure up still more wrath against the day of wrath?

Do I read of some, that came in at the eleventh hour? but I do not read, that they were called before: as I so often have been. And for ought I know, it might be the first call, which the thief on the cross had. However then, was the Lord in such a way of working miracles, as I am not now to look for: when he made the sun put on darkness; and not only the veil of the temple, but the rocks to rend, and the earth to quake, and the dead to rise; then he converted this malefactor. But, O when is such a concurrence of wonderful circumstances again to be expected!

Let who will then, harden their hearts against the voice that calls them to-day: let them adjourn the good motions to another day, a fitter time: and the young think it would make them ridiculous, to be religious: and the middle-aged think themselves so full of business, they have somewhat else to mind: and the old decrepit wretches think to have themselves excused, because of their age and infirmities: O my soul, let me not run all that concerns me for ever, upon so nice a point, as some future happy juncture. How long shall wickedness lodge in me? Ah Lord, have I not given it too
too

too much harbour already? And when the house is on fire, shall I stand still, and wait for a better opportunity, to quench it hereafter. O what prodigious unbelief of the great things in another world is it, that makes me so listless; when death, and judgment, and eternity are at my back, and close at my heels? As soon as Saul was called, he conferred not with flesh and blood; but yielded up himself immediately, Gal. i. 16. And when my call is clear, there is no room left to demur; but I must make quick dispatch: and not cry, I have no leisure; or I cannot bring myself to it: so to cavil myself out of my salvation. But may I straightway rid my hands of every cursed thing, that threatens danger and ruin to my soul: and when the Lord bids me seek his face, let my heart forthwith answer, Thy face, Lord, will I seek. Too long I have kept off from thee; too long stood out against thee: lo, now I come to thee: Lord, forgive me, and receive me: and I will be thine from hence forward, faithfully, and eternally. I will make haste, and not delay, to keep thy commands. But while I have time and means before me, will make my use and benefit of them. Because I know not, what a day may produce, to put me quite past them. I will be busy in this my day: that I may not, too late, repent my sloth and neglect, another day: nor cry out, when time is past, O that I had been wise sooner! but work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: that when he shall come to judge me, I may find mercy from the Lord in that day.

THE PRAYER.

“ **A**ND whilst I linger, and hang back, Lord,
 “ be merciful to me, and reveal thy glorious
 “ arm, to take hold of me, and pluck me out of
 “ my danger, (as thou didst Lot out of Sodom;)
 “ and bring me home to my God, by such a timely
 “ repentance, and serious conversion: that I may
 “ not stay to be undone, in my bad condition;
 “ but may come to see the joy of thy salvation;
 “ and reach up, before the door be shut, to find an
 “ entrance into the everlasting kingdom of my
 “ Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION XLI.

Of the soul of man.

MY soul! thou art my better immortal part;
 yea, my very self. And yet how little do I
 consider what thou art: or regard thee according
 to thy worth? O how do I live, as if I were all
 flesh; and acted only by the mechanism of bodily
 powers? whereas my spirit within me is the living
 spring of all the motion: and a much more sub-
 stantial being, than my body. Because it subsists
 by itself; and resembles the blessed God, who is a
 pure spirit: and yet the most real entity; yea, all
 life and energy. Whoever would explode the no-
 tion of a spiritual substance, as an evanid chimæra,
 and mere creature of the brain: that which effects
 all

all the great things wrought in the world, cannot be so fictitious: but must needs be a real being. And what is that, but the force of thought, and invisible substance? For body is dull and sluggish, and can do thing: but by the impression, that it receives from a spirit. Though, (after the vulgar rate of thinking,) we use to mistake substance for body: as if there were no substance, but what has matter and quantity: yet are there not indeed more substantial beings in the world, than some that can neither be felt nor seen. As all the glorious angels: yea, the blessed God himself, who subsists of himself, and supports all the world. The most true and mighty being is a spirit: and compared with spirit, body is but as the shadow, and semblance of being: or the tool and engine, laboured by the vital operator out of sight, that does all.

My soul, then, thou art somewhat distinct from my body: yea, and the constituent part, that makes me a man. For as soon as thou art departed, the body is then no man; but only a corpse. And thou art a substance: because in thee, virtues and vices, arts and sciences do inhere, as in their subject. And thou dost perform those actions, that are independent on the flesh: and contrive and effect many matters, wherein the body is not at all concerned, so much as an instrument. For when I think and reason, and will, and resolve within myself; what is all this to the body? my inner man does it, without asking the body leave; or being beholden to it, for any assistance. And still may this inner man be lively and healthy, even when the outer is going all to rottenness and ruin. But were my soul nothing more than the bodily life and vigour; why then might not men kill it? which yet our Lord has assured us, they cannot, Luke xii. 4. And when man is made after the image of God, Gen. i. 26. How gross were it to think, that he looks like God,
in

in his outward appearance; as one man resembles another? It must be then in the intellectual faculties, and the reasonable soul; that latent spring of action, which escapes the notice of bodily eyes: though it penetrates and pervades the whole body; and is all over every where in it: which indeed only a spirit can be. And if my soul be rational, it must also be a spiritual substance. For what substance else is capable of reason? I would as soon believe, that a tree or a mushroom could reason, as a man: if he had no spiritual substance, for the seat and source of his reason. And they that are plunged so deep in matter they can perceive nothing beyond it; but pronounce all that is not body to be no more than phantom: yet cannot they keep the soul from sparkling out, and shewing itself, in their very disputes against the soul. And if there be no such spiritual substance, I will be bold then to say, there is nothing at all in the world: nor could there ever have been any world at all. For the world which I see and live in, I am sure did not make itself, nor come by chance. And if it had a builder; he must have a wonderful reach of thought; to dispose the even infinite variety of things, which it contains, in such exact manner, that no one can devise, how any thing should be altered for the better. And he must also have a mighty stroke of power, to do whatever he has a mind to: or else how could he ever have erected the stupendous fabric of heaven and earth? when the biggest power else that we are acquainted with cannot make so much as the least fly, or contemptible worm. And if I am sure, there must be such wisdom and power; where can they be found but in a spiritual being? for matter and body, (every one sees,) is senseless and heavy: that knows nothing, and can do nothing: not reason, or think: nor so much as move and stir, any further than it is moved. Let it be never so much
 rarified;

rarified; what more sense has a vapour, than a pool of water? or let it be never so much agitated: will a pot of liquor, when boiling, fall a disputing? I might as easily believe, that words and reasons could be struck out of the flint and the steel; as that the meeting and jostling of atoms, should strike them into life and understanding: and create all the lofty flights of apprehension, and turns of wit, and depths of judgment, yea and habits of virtue, that are in the soul.

I find somewhat within me, that thinks and perceives, and reflects and pauses, and doubts, and purposes, and denies, and consents, and chooses, and refuses: and all these operations, I know, must have a cause: they cannot come from nothing: nor from mere matter, however modified. And therefore they must result from the thoughtful being which inhabits in my body: from thee, my soul, my invisible self that art a little image of the great God: a divine heavenly principle in me: from whence alone it is, that I am capable of thinking, and conceiving, and considering, of divine heavenly things above me. My soul, that is a beam of the eternal sun, so highly descended, as from the Ancient of days, inclines me towards the Father of spirits, as its blessed center of rest. And wilt thou then, my soul, that art so near allied to the Lord of heaven; and a child of the MOST HIGH, forget thy noble parentage; to go and lick the dust, and yield up thyself, to be pinned down to the ground: as if thou wert fit for no better matters, but to rot in the earth? O mount up, like thyself; and point at heaven. Away to thy Father's house: and let nothing under him, that made thee, ever content thee. Let not a world detain thee, who art more worth than all the world. There is nothing here that can ever answer thy vast desires: only the infinite God can fill them: and only he who is blessed
for

for ever, can be thy indefeasible inheritance. For when thou art unsheathed of this flesh, thou must try the fortune of a state everlasting: and there live in happiness or misery, to all eternity. And that thy being may not out-last the good of thy being; that thou mayest not then be lost, and I for ever undone: O be wise and provident now for thyself; to secure thy eternal effects. Do not debase and forget thyself, to take up with the pitiful gratifications of sense; that will all shrink away at thy departure hence, and leave thee to sad and eternal shifts. But look out after the satisfactions and fruitions, that will stay by thee for ever, in the world to come, whither thou art going. So accustom thyself to the heavenly work, that thou mayest aforehand take possession of the heavenly life. God has given thee, my soul, the sagacity and foresight; to scout abroad, and pry into futurity; and compare between things temporal and eternal. O remember thy short abode here, and thy endless duration hereafter. And then use (to some good purpose) the understanding which thou hast above the brutes, in caring for the state where there must infinitely survive them, that where thou must make thy everlasting abode, it may go well with thee for ever; and thou mayest not only have some merry moments; but the felicity, that shall hold out with thee, to all eternity.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** My GOD! who hast given me a soul,
 “ more worth than the world; give me
 “ also the wisdom and grace, to value and regard
 “ it as I ought: that I may never forget or slight
 “ it; nor prefer my vile body before it; but may
 “ act, as becomes it; and be tender of doing any
 “ thing

ing to wrong it ; taking the greatest care of it, and making the best provision, that I am able, for it ; yea, where thou knowest, O Lord, what sorry keeper I am ; O do thou preserve my darling ; and let it be safe in thy hands : that it may never be lost ; but obtain everlasting salvation, through Jesus Christ my Lord. Amen."

MEDITATION XLII.

Of the future state.

THAT there is a world to come, and another life to be lived by all men, after the end of present : that when a man dies, there's not an end of him ; but then he begins to be, what he is to be for ever : this is a truth so far discovered by the very light of nature, and attested by the common sense of mankind ; that I have for it, (myself) in a manner, the universal suffrage of all the nations upon earth ; even those who have not learnt it from that holy scripture-revelation, which teaches and confirms it to Christians. And indeed every reason of the thing, and a little serious consideration, might convince me of it, and give satisfaction, that so it must be. If I but bethink myself, that God is, and what he is ; that there is a God, my soul, thy own conscience within thee, assure thee : and all his works abroad round about thee, do most plainly shew thee. And as certainly as he is God, he must be true, and righteous, and good. And if he be true, he will not then deceive the world. If he be righteous, he will not
rest

rest in any unequal distributions: and if he be good, he will not fail the best of his servants. But where were his truth, if he gave the world notices and expectations, of what shall never be? and persuaded us to believe, what we shall never find? and planted in our natures, the hopes and fears of that happiness and misery to come, which are no realities, but chimæras? has he said, and shall not he make it good? O let God be true; though every man be a liar. For sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than his word shall go off unfulfilled.

And if God be righteous, then will he sooner or later, be sure to make an equal difference between good men and bad: which that it is not done now in this world, has been the old complaint, and exception against God and his providence. And the prosperity of the wicked, and the troubles of the godly, is a trite theme, and common observation: that the best men, have so often the worst of it here: and the vilest sinners go away with their fill of the world's good. Some mens wickedness is not now detected; and so escapes unpunished: and others, though notoriously criminal; yet prove too big for the justice of this world. Therefore, as sure as God is just, all these things that miss of a due regulation here, must be called over again, and set to rights elsewhere. And if God be good, he will never be so hard and unkind to the best of his servants, as to give them capacities and desires, only to tantalize and torment them. Much less will he suffer their very faithfulness in his service, to damnify and undo them. Both which yet would befall them: if he had not retributions in another world for them. For holy men have the faculties and inclinations to know and enjoy God more, than in this world they ever do, or can. There's no attaining of their greatest ends in this life: and so the knowledge and love which they have at present, would

ould not only prove in vain to them : but serve for nothing, save to baffle and afflict them ; if they could not some time, and somewhere else, find the accomplishment and perfection of them. If their hope were only in this life, they would not only be more miserable than any men : but behind-hand with the very brutes ; which do now enjoy the whole, that ever they were made for. Whereas Christians, who live chiefly upon reverſions, the better they do grow, the ſtronger confidence ſtill, and the livelier proſpect they have, of the eternal things before them. For indeed, ungodlineſs is the main ground of any one's diſbelieving them. And therefore the haters of a holy life dream there is no future life. After their luſts have maſtered their wills ; their wills are for maſtering their faith. And no wonder they ſhould be glad to rid themſelves of the belief of that which they cannot believe without pain. It being ſo much for their intereſt, to be heard of no more hereafter ; ſo from thinking as they would have it, they bring themſelves to believe as they think. But ſuch as have lived like men ; and lived unto God, for the ends, whereto he made them ; as they know they ſhall not, ſo they deſire, they may not, thus go off, and ceaſe to be. No, it would be heavy news to them, and nothing ſo much againſt them ; as the fruſtration of all their expectation, for another world : in order to which, they have ſtill been doing all that they did in this world. They would count themſelves undone, to fall ſhort of it. When they deny themſelves, and break their wills, and mortify their luſts ; and let go even their lives, and all that ever they have in the world, for the ſake of their Lord, and in deference to his Word : if he ſhould turn them off ſo, and look upon them no more : but after a wretched life, give them up to a deſpiſed death, and to lie down in eternal night ; their fidelity and obedience would thus prove to be

their final loss and ruin. But God forbid, that I should offer so to blaspheme infinite goodness; as ever to entertain such an impious thought, that the God of love, the best of all lords, should make the service of any of his creatures their snare: or engage them to wait upon him, to their hurt. This I am fully persuaded shall never be. And therefore I am as certain, that a future state there must needs be.

And that is the state, my soul, which thou art made for, and must for ever be fixed in. Thou art journeying on apace to it. And what is this present world, but thy short passage thither: here is but thy inn: that world of spirits is thy home. O may thy concern then, as to each condition, bear some agreeable proportion. That thou mayest not be the thousandth part, so much concerned for this state, as for that to come. But be ever and anon looking out, with an eye upon it: and do all that thou dost with a due regard to it. For there lies thy all; and whatever relates only to this present life, is the smallest matter of all. The least of thy business is in this world: and what most lies thee upon, is to get off safe from it. But to ingulph thyself in the pleasures of flesh; or to intangle thyself with the affairs of this life, O how foreign is it to thy purpose! and how destructive may it prove to all thy hopes! seeing thou canst not chuse but love to live, and to be happy: and here, my soul, thou canst neither live long, nor be happy at all: O then seek further, where thou mayest live for ever, and enjoy a happiness as compleat as it shall be lasting; and so act a short part upon this stage of mortality; that where thou must fix and abide alway, thou mayest be for ever easy and happy.

THE PRAYER.

O LORD! I am here a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. This is none of my rest; but only the passage to that state, for which I am made, and where I shall be at home, in my own place. O keep me ever mindful of my journeying condition; and fix my contemplation on that world to come, where I must make my everlasting habitation. Suffer me not so to forget myself, as here to be taking root, and setting up my rest: but let me carry, as belonging to another country; and do all with reference to that future state, which I beseech thee, O my God, so to prepare me for; that my removal to it may be indeed a happy change, and may give me cause to praise thee forever. Amen."

MEDITATION XLIII.

Of the resurrection of the body.

WHAT that the dead should raise themselves, and by any virtue of their own, return from a station to the former habit; my soul, who can conceive it? But that he who at first made them out of nothing, should restore them again out of their ruins, who can doubt his power? nay, when he has said it, who will call in question his word? besides the illustrations of the resurrection, that

that I see in nature; as the renewing of the face of the earth, every year: and the rising of another light still every day: I have the most plain and express texts of Holy Scripture for it, to give me assurance of it. Job xix. 26, 27. "Though after my
 " skin worms destroy this body; yet in my flesh
 " shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself;
 " and my eyes shall behold, and not another."
 Dan. xii. 2. "Many of them that sleep in the dust
 " of the earth shall awake; some to everlasting life,
 " and some to shame and everlasting contempt."
 John vi. 40. "Every one that believes in me, I
 " will raise him up at the last day." 1 Theff. iv.
 16. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." (And
 that supposes the rest to come after.) "Yea," Acts
 xxiv. 15. "there shall be a resurrection of the
 " dead, both of the just and the unjust." And
 Rev. xx. 12. "I saw the dead, small and great,
 " stand before God. And the sea gave up the dead
 " that were in it; and death and hell (or the in-
 " visible state) delivered up the dead that were in
 " them. And they were judged every man accord-
 " ing to his works."

If then, my soul, I will be determined, by what the Word of God has revealed, I have no room left to make any doubt of the resurrection, but may be certain, that this very body, which I now bear about me, after death has thrown down, and all demolished it, shall spring again out of its rubbish, and be revived and repaired to stand for eternal ages. As sure as my body lives, and shall once decay, and languish and die, and go to corruption, so sure shall it be raised, and brought to life again, and made immortal and past dying any more for ever. Yea, there shall be a day of general goal-delivery, when the dead shall be roused with the trump of God, and fetched out of the prison of the grave, to stand before his judgment-seat. That justice

justice and mercy may have their course, not only upon souls; but also the bodies, which were their companions and partners: by which they acted, and with which they were most intimately conjoined. And till bodies are so set up and raised, how will death be abolished; or the transgression, which caused their dissolution, finished?

Whatever Sadducees do think, according to their own wishes; or cavil, after their vain fancies; and suspend their belief of that, which cannot be demonstrated by reason, and exceeds the sphere of nature; and though some, that, with much ado, will allow a kind of resurrection of the very same bodies which died; (and then, indeed, it would not be a resurrection, but a creation: not a quickening of our mortal bodies, nor this corruptible putting on incorruption; and this mortal putting on immortality: that is, the restoration of the former substance, clothed with new qualities: which is a proper notion of a resurrection.)

No wonder, my soul, if this sad hearing of the bodies rising, do arm them against it, who have carried so, as if they should never see it. Well may they, who live like the beasts that perish, desire to perish with them too; and after death, to be no more. But when they hear of the resurrection of the dead, and answering for what they have done in their bodies; though they mock at it, with those Acts xvii. 30. that will not put it a jot further from them; but make it only the sadder, when it comes upon them: to find, that what they did deride, they cannot avoid; but even their dear flesh, which here they were all for pleasing, must bear its share in the future suffering; and be there far more tormented, than ever here it was comforted.

But,

But, O what reviving news is this to the pious and afflicted members of Christ Jesus, who do now keep under their bodies, and deny themselves the sinful liberties which others do boldly take, and were also, it may be, distempered and persecuted in the flesh: that all these troublesome matters shall not only be ended, but mended, with them. That after the heaviness enduring for the night of this mortal life, joy shall come in the morning of the resurrection: and their grieving for sin, and humbling themselves in the dust, and patient enduring the cross, and resisting even unto blood, shall be changed into perfect health, and ease, and beauty, and gladness of heart. Then shall they find, how much better it was, to enter into life maimed; and through the fiery trial pass into Abraham's bosom, than to go prosperous and frolic with Dives, down to the fire that never shall be quenched.

O my soul, be not cast down within me, at any troubles of the flesh, coming upon me: nor repine at the prosperous circumstances, of any jolly sinners about me. Envy none of their sportive bouts, and and fleshly triumphs; who feed themselves, as for a day of slaughter: not only for the worms in the grave, but for that never-dying worm in a worse place. Nor let me fear them, that can but kill the body: as long as I have affiance in him, who can and will raise it in power and glory, changing the vile into a glorious body; but weather it out, through the pressures of this short time, till all that afflicts shall be done away; and even the body itself be past suffering any more. For when it dies, it shall not be lost, but rest in hope; and when my good friends die, I will not sorrow, as one that has no hope; but reckon to see their faces again in a better life. And when my poor brethrens bodies call for relief, I will not withhold my kindness from them: but by some obligations laid upon them, obtain their

their testimony for me in that final reckoning; when so much inquiry will be made, how we fed the hungry, clothed the naked, visited the sick, ministered to the distressed: and the Judge has told us, that he will take what was done to one of the least of his brethren, as done to himself.

And let who will rust their bodies in idleness, overcharge them with excesses, or pin them down to the earth in worldly mindedness: O with what face will they appear before the great God, in the open eye of the world, in those very bodies, which now they so vitiate, and prostitute to the vilest usages? and when they make their bodies such dunghills, and shops of uncleanness, O how may they dread to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, that last receptacle for such, as hated to be cleansed, and would be filthy still? O my soul, may I never pamper those lusts of the flesh, which would make it fuel for the fire of hell: but now keep under my body; that hereafter it may rise gloriously: and give myself to do such things in the body, as I may not be ashamed, but glad, to hear of, in the great day.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** Thou that art the resurrection and the life,
 “ and quickenest both the naturally, and the
 “ spiritually dead! enliven my soul with thy spirit
 “ of grace, that I may also keep my body, in a case
 “ hopeful for thy heavenly glory; and not defile
 “ the member of my Saviour: but so manage and
 “ use it, that I may, with comfort, appear before
 “ thee in it. O how many times and places do
 “ testify against me, the abuses that I have done
 “ to it: which fill me with confusion and dread, to
 “ think of shewing my face to thy majesty, in this
 “ body!

“ body ! but, O merciful Saviour, pity and forgive
 “ my frailty, and folly, my sensuality, and iniqui-
 “ ty ! and cleanse me with thy own precious blood ;
 “ to set me right again, with my holy God. And
 “ preserve me in my integrity and purity, my faith
 “ and affiance in my glorious head : That thou
 “ mayst present me without spot or blemish, thro’
 “ thy own unexceptionable holiness and infinite me-
 “ rits, O my blessed Redeemer. Amen.”

MEDITATION XLIV.

Of the day of judgment.

MY soul, what thou hast so often heard, and
 professed still to believe, that there will be a
 day when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, shall come
 to judge the quick and the dead ; art thou not clear-
 ly convinced, and fully persuaded of it ? when even
 nature gives thee such intimations, out of which
 thou mayst spell it : and the consideration of thy
 own frame will help so much to confirm thee in it.
 For as thou hast reason, to discern good and evil ;
 and a law to go by ; and a will to chuse for thyself ;
 and a God that made thee such a kind of creature,
 to be responsible to him : well mayst thou expect to
 be called to account. The very conscience, which
 teases thee, for the evil which thou dost, and fills
 thee with dread to answer for it, after thou hast
 done it ; gives thee strong presages of the judgment
 approaching, to which thou art going : and where-
 to that conscience within thee, is as heaven’s appa-
 ritor, to give thee summons. Yea all the inequa-
 lity in God’s providential dispensations, whereby it
 so

so often here goes ill with the good, and well with the bad ; may it not awaken thine, as it has done the consideration of all the thinking part of the world ; to conclude, that there must and shall be yet, such a turning of the scale, and decision of every particular case, as shall make the justice of Heaven, which seems so much clouded at present, shine brightly forth, to the open view of all the world ?

But beyond all these strong presumptions of thy own, my soul, there is the plain revelation of God, to put the thing past all peradventure ; “ that God “ has appointed a day, wherein he will judge the “ world in righteousness,” Acts xvii. 31. “ And “ after death, the judgment,” Heb. ix. 27. And indeed all the great promises and threatenings, as well as the precepts of the gospel, have such a reference to it, that thou must reject this whole gospel, before thou canst disbelieve it. What remains therefore, but that thou turn thy thoughts towards it, much muse upon it ; and bend all thy care, to make ready for it ? O look forward then, and foresee that time, in the evening of time ; when there shall be a general rendezvous of all the children of Adam together ; and the Lord shall come to reckon with all his servants, how they have acted their parts here on the present stage of this world : when the sun shall grow black as a sack-cloth of hair, and the moon be turned into blood ; and the stars of heaven fall down upon the earth ; and the firmament shrink up as a parchment scroll ; and every mountain and sea be removed out of their places : and all the present face of things shall vanish ; and this world be unravelled in flames ; and ungodly men be driven out of their holds, no longer to find any harbour in that world which they now prefer above God ; and make it their armour and garrison, in which to fortify themselves against him : when they shall see

the very last of all their portion in this life ; yea and see the very instruments of their pleasure, turned into a devouring fire, to encircle and torment them. " When the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, " with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, " and with the trump of God," 1 Theff. iv. 16. And " the Lord Jesus be revealed from heaven, " with his mighty angels, in flaming fire," 2 Theff. i. 7, 8. When the thrones shall be erected, and the books opened ; and all that were dead shall thereafter be judged ; and irreversible sentence upon every one shall be passed ; for which they must for ever abide, without any appeal to another tribunal. When all shall be judged, according to what they have been and done ; not only for gross sins, against the light of nature ; but for stifling convictions, and withstanding good motions, and hiding their talents, and losing their time, and neglecting and abusing mercies ; for not taking warnings, nor believing the reports of God's messengers : and for doing the tempter's work upon others ; to seduce them from God, and their duty ; and pull them into the snare and condemnation of the devil : yea for their lustings, and secret sins, and wicked intrigues, closely conveyed from the observation of the world : " God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus " Christ," Rom. ii. 16. All shall come out ; and nothing be so hid, but that day of manifestation shall reveal it. Nor shall any escape the trial : but " all must appear before the judgment-seat of " Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. v. 10. " The dead small " and great shall stand before God," Rev. xx. 12. even the greatest must not then think to take state upon them, and send their excuses, to be absent : nor the poorest think themselves too inconsiderable, there to be taken notice of. And even the most abject wretch, that lies lowest in the world, and is so much the contempt of the proud, as not to be thought

thought worth their looking upon: yet has he as precious a soul as any, to save or lose: and therefore shall have as fair and full a hearing, as the biggest of the world's grandees. And the domineering tyrants, the strutting gallants, and the scornful wantons, that take so much upon them, above all others, must yet stand upon a level with the rest, naked and trembling to give up their last accounts. The sprightly youngster also, that sets death and judgment furthest from him; till they are even defied by him; counting that his youth must bear him out to live even as he list: yet even for all the sins of his youth, "God will bring him into judgment," Eccles. xi. 9. For the Lord has but one and the same rule of judgment, by which he will proceed upon all: and "that is according to the gospel," Rom. ii. 16. And therefore as they conform to it, or swerve from it; so shall they receive their portion at the hands of their Judge.

And what shall I answer then for my sinful self, O Lord; when thou shalt bring me into judgment! I dread the trial of thy just tribunal: my flesh trembles for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgment.

But consider this, my soul; is there no way to be tried, but by my works? no, the gospel assures me of it. Yet let me expound this in such manner, as not to destroy that doctrine of justification by faith only; which is the best hold, that I know of even for the holiest Christian in the world. Thus then I take it, that unbelievers shall be judged in strictness according to their works; without any of that faith in Christ, which they would not secure to themselves. But believers shall be judged by their works, with respect also to their faith in the blessed Saviour; which will be the main consideration that turns the scale, to save them; because, "he that believeth on the Son of God, is not condemned," but

“but hath everlasting life,” John iii. 18, 38. Yet shall their works be called over in that public judgment, as the indications of their faith: and indeed, not good, but as springing from the root. Now if God be not righteous, thus to take all men as he finds them; “how then shall he judge the world?” Rom. iii. 6. But yet should he enter into judgment with the very best man in the world, exactly and strictly according to his works; without any regard to his faith in the Lord Jesus: O then who at all could he save? when alas, not a just man upon earth, but sins daily: and so had he his due desert, would perish eternally. I dare not therefore think of any such judging according to works, but what leaves room still for the healings and reserves, made by repentance, and faith in our Saviour’s blood. And O what works can the Lord see, but what himself has wrought in us? yea, what faith, but that which is his own gift to us? yet it is his righteous judgment still: because according to the measures, which God himself hath set in his holy word. Nor is he any respecter of persons, to acquit and save the penitent and faithful, even with all their failings, and their sins: because their repentance (in the gospel-computation) is counted for the undoing of what they have misdone: And their faith in Christ transfers their guilt upon him; and also makes his righteousness their own.

What time I am afraid then, to find my sins produced against me, in the judgment, for which per-adventure, I have escaped shame here in the world; O how shall I give thee any hope and comfort, my soul, but by virtue of this belief, that the repented sins of my life (though they shall not be stifled, in the final audit, so that I shall hear of them no more; yet) I shall not hear of them, to my confusion, and condemnation; but together with the sins, my repentance also and faith shall be recited: and then

hen will those offences do me no more harm, than if they had never been committed. But nothing beside this, do I know in the world, that can give me boldness in the day of judgment, and make me brave the appearing of my Lord, and wait with comfort for his coming. Did I not believe my Judge to be also my advocate, who will not scrutinize, and sift my works and actions, without a merciful allowance, for my frailties and temptations; nor proceed without all those mitigations that my case will allow of. And will not lose me, where, in the most favourable construction of the gospel-terms he can save me.

Whoever then do put the Saviour from them, and reckon to do their own business without him, and so are like to find judgment without mercy, and to receive only according to the works that themselves have done, without any regard to the faith in Christ, of which they made so light: O my soul, do thou kiss the Son, and make a friend of him who is to be thy Judge. Never venture upon the tribunal of God, in the strength and virtue of any thing that thou hast in thyself, to bear thee out. For so, when weighed in the balance, thou wilt certainly be found wanting. But look unto the Lord thy righteousness, and go hide in the clefts of that spiritual rock, alledging his satisfaction for thy salvation, and pleading only his merits; where none of my own thou canst find, to build thy trust upon.

Nay, had I much more holiness, than, alas, I can pretend to: had I led a more innocent, useful life, than (the Lord knows) I have done: and were I so much better than I am, that I could vie even with the holiest man upon earth; yet would I disclaim all that ever I had, or did, for matter of any dependence on it, to bear me out in the dreadful day; and

and I would fly for refuge, under the wings of that Saviour, who is to be my judge.

But yet the very name of judgment carries an awakening sound with it; and where all that ever I have lies at stake, I will go full of concern about my trial, at the great and last assize; not only in care, but make my conversation look fair to the eye of the world; but to approve my very heart to the inspection of my judge, I will humble myself before him, for all the sins, that I have committed against him: and endeavour still more and more to break them off, and indeed to live godly in Christ Jesus. Yet after I have done all my very best, still will I cast myself on the mercies of God, in my blessed Redeemer; and not confide in my own, but in his righteousness; and cast my burden upon him, and leave the matter in his hands; hoping for his worthiness, to find the mercy and heaven, which I can never presume to deserve myself; and to receive such a blessed sentence in the great day of the Lord, as may transport me with gladness and joy unspeakable, world without end,

THE PRAYER.

“ **B**lessed JESUS! the Lord our righteousness;
 “ who wilt also be the Lord our judge! re-
 “ member I pray thee, in mercy, the purchase of
 “ thy own precious blood. And so take away my
 “ sins from me; and impute thy righteousness to
 “ me, that I, who deserve only to be abhorred and
 “ condemned, for what I am in myself, may yet
 “ be fully absolved, and eternally saved, through
 “ the redemption and merits of my holy blessed
 “ Saviour. Even so come Lord Jesus, to plead thy
 “ own cause, assert thy truth, and advance thy in-
 “ terests, and make thy enemies thy footstool, and
 “ thy

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thy now abused religion, the renown and triumph of all that are faithful in it. And may I so remember thy judgment, and prepare for thy coming, and keep myself in thy love, that even the terrible day of the Lord, may be the most joyful day to my soul; and may put an end to all my sins, and fears, and sorrows, and let me into that kingdom of my God, where I shall be most highly pleased, and for ever blessed. "Amen."

MEDITATION XLV.

Of Eternity.

O Thou bottomless abyss! amazing eternity! my understanding is at a loss to comprehend thee: my heart fails me, but to think of thee. An everlasting state, my soul, though it be the measure of thy own duration, yet canst thou not see through it, nor deal with it. But after thou hast been looking never so long at the things eternal, and prying never so far into that unknown profundity; there is abundantly more still beyond, than yet thou hast seen. Yea, even at the very utmost length that ever thou canst reach, there is that which is infinite still before thee; and no manner of bounds to be discovered. Thou mayst (though with much ado) run up the biggest number of years, that is determinate and certain, and has some end: but where the computation will never be up, though thou taketh millions for units, and puttest a thousand years for one day; where not only the common period
of

of threeſcore and ten, but even threeſcore and ten thouſand years are as nothing, to the vaſt immenſurate eternity, that will never, never be done : O what canſt thou ſay to it, but acknowledge, that thou art utterly baffled with the reckoning ; and haſt no ability to caſt up ſuch an account ? but the leſs thou canſt deal with it, the more ſtill art thou concerned to conſider it ; and to make the better provision for it. Be cauſe thou art failing on apace to that boundleſs ocean : and there thou wilt ſhortly be taken up, and fixed in an unalterable condition. Here thou art a gueſt, and a ſtranger : that's my home, and biding-place for ever. O then think, and think again, in the greateſt ſeriousneſs, what ſhall become of thee to all eternity. Let that which will ere long ſwallow up all things, now ſwallow up all thy thoughts : and in the moſt ſolemn contemplation, ſeparate thyſelf aforehand from this world ; whence thou wilt, after a while, be indeed ſeparated for ever. Thou art upon the very brink of that unchangeable ſtate : and O how ſoon will it have thee in, as one of the ſettled inhabitants there, never to be removed ? and when all thy future being, depends upon thy preſent doing ; and thereafter as thou carrieſt here, thou wilt fare everlaſtingly elſewhere : O what haſt thou to do in this world, but to make ready for the next ! canſt thou be ſatisfied, to be eaſy, and well provided for a few days, and not care how it ſhall go with thee, world without end ? can I be at all wiſe, to ſhew more concern for a periſhing body, than for the never-dying ſoul ? O extremity of folly, ſottiſhneſs, madneſs ? For if here I am poor or ſick, pained or diſeaſed ; though it be not to laſt always : yet how do I caſt, and ſhift all manner of ways, to get the matter amended ? and what care am I in, for the ſupplies of life, as long as I have a life to be maintained ? to lay up for the future ; that I may be ſure to have enough ? and O how

How much bigger, how incomparably weightier, is the concern, to provide for another future, for the life everlasting? and what can ever quiet the cravings of my never-dying soul, but the provisions, that shall be as durable as itself? that it may not survive all its comforts; nor be set to live upon air, or nothing: when it shall be out of all here for ever. How much less, my soul, canst thou be secure and careless, if so be thou hast more reason to fear a curse, than to hope a blessed immortality? O shall I send thee off, not only destitute and naked, but maimed and spoiled; to go and seek thy fortune in that wide world of spirits, from whence thou shalt never return? when, alas, all thy time in this world at longest, to the following eternity, is not so much as an hour to a thousand years: nay, but like an hour's dreaming of happiness or misery, to a thousand years real happiness or misery: O who in his wits, would choose a merry dream of an hour long, followed with a thousand years of torment; rather than a melancholy dream of an hour, followed with a thousand years of pleasure? and, now, alas, how do we, vain creatures, imagine we are, what we be not; and suppose that we enjoy, what we do not? but when we die, all the dreams then, will be over: and we shall rouse, to see things in their realities: when the shades will flee away; and the truth and substance, will succeed; even what will still remain, and what we must abide by for ever. O my soul, be very indifferent then to all the things of this world: and let it be the smallest matter with thee, what thou enjoyest, or what thou endurest here for a moment: so that thou escape eternal suffering, and attain to be blessed, and pleased, for evermore.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** Everlasting GOD! how poor and inconsiderable are all things temporal, compared with those that are eternal! yet, thou knowest, and I must acknowledge, the folly, whereof I have been guilty; in shewing more concern for this present time, than for the never-ending eternity. After all that I have heard and thought of it, yet, O how short am I of worthily apprehending it! how lightly can I pass it by? how little have I been affected with it? how little influenced by it? this is a stupid, and a wicked oversight: O gracious Lord! forgive it, and amend it. And awaken my mind, to look towards the everlasting state; and engage my heart to dwell upon it: that I may not center all my cares upon a moment of mortal life, nor think it enough, to have an easy pleasant time, for a little while upon earth; but may, above all, respect the infinite eternity of the world to come: that where I must take up my everlasting abode, it may go well with me for ever. Amen.”

MEDITATION XLVI.

Of hell.

MY Soul, do not refuse, often to be poring upon that extremity of misery, which thou canst never think of enduring. For be it never so grievous to consider, yet may that consideration be
of

of highest advantage, which shall quicken thee so to fly from it, that thou mayest never bear it. But who knows the power of his anger? when 'tis blackness of darkness all over, how canst thou look into it! O mayest thou never come, by experience, to know it! but so sadly think upon it, that thou mayest keep far enough away out of it. I hear it described by a bottomless pit, a furnace of fire, and a lake burning with fire and brimstone, stripes and torments; attended with weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth; departing from the blessed God, with his curse, never any more to see his face; to lie bye in a dark, disconsolate hole, bound hand and foot; not only neglected, and unpitied, but all over pierced and pained, among such hideous company as the devil and his angels; where uneasiness, and anguish, and horror, and despair is even the element of the place, and the worm of conscience cannot be killed, nor the fire of God's wrath quenched; but that punishment, which is the sad wages and desert of sin, will be everlasting. Where the damned have no rest day or night, but the smoke of their torments ascends up for ever and ever. Such an account as this may we gather from express Scripture. And what figures of speech may be couched in any of these descriptions of hell's misery, I will not undertake to determine. Be they tropical, or literal, most sure I am, there shall be nothing in it inconsistent with the most exact justice, to appoint; nothing unworthy the wisest and best of beings to inflict. I and others may labour under mistakes as to divers particulars, which may not be properties, but metaphors, as will give small relief to the sufferers. For spiritual pangs and agonies have an acuteness, that can vie with all the bodily pains and pressures: and that which is express'd by fire, if it be not the very thing, yet may pierce and torment, even all one, as that, whose name it bears.

And

And will not thy own reason, my soul, tell thee, that sin, which wrongs and affronts the Majesty of heaven, worse than any treason or rebellion does an earthly prince, certainly deserves to be punished? but how it shall be punished, the supreme Lord, and most unexceptionable Judge of all the world, is fittest to determine. Whether by annihilation, to cashier the offenders out of being. Now that annihilation is not sufficient, we commonly see in hardened malefactors, who persuading themselves, that they shall be no more after death, care not to hazard, and throw away their lives, to enjoy some present ease and pleasures, and to make a grateful provision for their flesh, while time serves. And were there but enough of that number, how soon would they be masters of the lives and enjoyments of all their neighbours; when they could but escape death for it here? and even that death, (for their lusts and carnal interests,) how easily will they venture, when they fear nothing to come after? so that even from hence, reason speaks it needful, that offenders should live in punishment after death. And then, if God do but keep them alive; and keep from them the meat, and drink, and clothes, and harbour, and health, and ease, and mercies, and conveniencies of life, (which sure he does not owe to such,) even in that case, to be eaten up with famine, and filled with diseases, and far removed from all friends, and helps, and comforts: O how forlorn; how wretched, would they be? and yet how then can they bring themselves to love him, when he has taken all away from them, who could find no hearts to bestow upon him, even when here he was so exceeding kind to them?

Indeed, they carry down to hell, a hell within themselves: even all the habitual wickedness, which is that combustible matter, the infernal flames will prey upon. Their own impenitent sins, will be some
of

of their worst tormentors: like so many vultures and hounds, tearing and gnawing their hearts. Their lusts and passions will madly rage in their breasts; ever hungry, to be filled; yet for ever disappointed. And dying impenitent, they do not then cease to be so, because they die: no, but the impenitence still cleaves to them, and is fast consigned upon them. Nor does the change of death make any change in their wicked nature: but even as they go off the present stage, they will abide in the same temper; not a jot altered for the better, but rather all confirmed in all the ill habits, which they take along with them thither, as a part of their punishment. Their own wickedness will be a severe lash, to correct them. And still they will go on to suffer, but never be able to make the least part of payment, nor have any to satisfy for them neither, because the great salvation of the Son of God they neglected, and in the day of grace would not accept nor use his mercy; nor by faith, and its fruits of a holy life, make good their interest in the only Saviour of the world. And so must lie by it eternally, past all hope of recovery.

And if an eternal, painful being be not too much to be threatened, then shall it not be too much to be inflicted; because God must be true, whatever some witty disputers may offer, or whatever any wicked creatures may suffer. Nor is it too much to threaten the sorest evils, to deter others from those sins which would ruin us; but, if it be not enough to deter us from our sins, how can we complain that it is too much to suffer for them? seeing the punishment is but our own choice, who will have the sins to which it is annexed. But when this subsequent sorrow does infinitely outweigh all the present pleasure of sin, O how do we cross all the laws even of self-preservation then, to run upon it! and yet what but the extremity and eternity of misery,

misery, has force enough in it, to prevail with us to reject and conquer the strong temptations, that, with all inviting address, and the biggest advantages of this world, do now press upon us? that misery then, I am not to look upon, as God's end; but means to corroborate his government of the world, and to enforce the observation of his laws. Nor need we fear it, if we do not pull it upon our own heads, by refusing the grace, and abusing the mercy that would keep us from it. But such as will dare damnation, because they take the Lord's threats but for empty sounds, shall find to their cost, what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God; and that his wrath is commensurate to the biggest of all their fears.

O my soul, let me not attempt to beat down the infernal sufferings, as if I had a mind to go and try them; nor contrive to abide, but to avoid them, by getting out of all the ways, which lead to that fearful end. Never let me think, that the enjoyment even of the longest life of sinful pleasure, will compensate for feeling the bitter pains of eternal death, but one quarter of an hour. O let me beg of God, to be afflicted here, as he pleases; so that I be spared for ever, and not lie by it in eternal sufferings. O thou heart-killing eternity, when made the measure of all this misery! that there is no redemption, for ever excludes every glimpse of consolation. And knowing the terrors of the Lord, O that I could persuade men! not to play with this damnation, and throw it, as a ball, at one another; not to dare it, or run the hazards of it; but a way, for the life of their souls, to escape from it?

O cursed sin, what hast thou done, so to ruin the world? and how deadly are thy mischiefs, that will never be over; but lie upon the undone sinners world without end? fots are they, that harbour thee; mad are they, that can make a game of thee.

And

whoever are bewitched by thee, and fall in with thee; I will defy, and dread, and abhor; as the price of the blood of my soul; my sin, my bane, my death and damnation. And never shall my heart envy the Dives, the jolly sinner who is treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; and soon will find the sad awakening, out of his golden dream; to open those shut doors in the pains of hell, that were shut against all things of his peace. O let me not eat of their fruits, that have such bitter and dreadful after-tastes; nor be taken with the broad and smooth path, that conduct to the black, horrible jail; where there is never any getting out. May I ever be in his holy fear, that has power to kill and send into hell; and cry fervently for mercy, in this day of mercy; that I may not be the cursed subject of all this misery. For a day or an hour may do, to obtain pardon, peace, and grace now; which all eternity cannot do hereafter. Now then, I take the time, to prevent the loss of my soul; think nothing too much to do for my security, on which the second death may have no power. But, O my soul, how canst thou ever enough praise and celebrate the mercy, which here has provided a remedy, to pluck thee, as a lost sheep, out of the jaws of hell; as a brand out of the everlasting fire, and paid thy ransom, for this thy saddest portion! O how dear should thy Jesus be to thee; for averting thee from the wrath to come; and that his own passion, which (through the infinite dignity of his divine person,) was even equivalent to damnation! I will love thee, my Saviour, and my deliverer; and O that I may still find thee near to me! not only to save me once, but even as often as I need. Save me, Lord, or I perish. Save me

me from that saddest end, even the forest of all misery, which shall never end : and from every perilous path, that thither tends ; for thy own sweet mercy's sake. Amen, Amen.

THE PRAYER.

“ **A**LMIGHTY and most holy God ! how intolerable is it, to endure thy dreadful wrath, which it is so grievous but to consider ! O how can I ever bear up under it, when it even kills my heart, but to think upon it ! I have known some of thy terrors, O Lord ; at such times as thou hast made me feel that melting and horror within my soul, which I am not able to utter with my tongue : when my sins, set home by thy Spirit's conviction, have cast me into consternation, as a lost creature ; in my own apprehension, just sinking into everlasting damnation. O gracious Father ! teach and help me, so to believe it, and lay it to heart ; that I may never come to groan under it, and cry out, my punishment is greater than I can bear : all is lost : there is no hope : the mercy of God is clean gone, for ever : he will be favourable no more. O quicken me, I beseech thee, to escape, for the life of my soul, and flee from the wrath to come : that that I may not be swallowed up in the burning gulph of that fiery indignation, O good God ! keep me from dashing against the rocks of presumption ; and from every great and wilful transgression. Yea, give me such a share in my blessed Saviour's redemption ; that whatever be my portion here, I may not suffer for ever ; but may have all my evil things in this life, and hereafter, rest, and ease, and fulness of joy and glory, in thy heavenly kingdom everlasting. Amen.

MEDITATION XLVII.

Of Heaven.

MY soul, it does not yet appear, what thou shalt be. It is only heaven itself, will tell thee to the full, what heaven is. Though I am sure, it is an everlasting state of complete holiness, and perfect happiness: of some things there, I can conclude with a certain knowledge, yet abundance more, I must leave to a prying faith, and probable conjecture: and for every particular, and for all the manner of the blessed enjoyment, O what am I, that should be accountable? I know there will be a full satisfaction taken, in the vision and fruition of God: who having in himself, the fulness and perfection of all truth and goodness, is the blessed centre, where happy souls will, with the highest extasies of joy above expression, fix for ever: as apprehending nothing at all, further to be known and loved, than what there is already seen and enjoyed. So much as now we have of God, so much have we of heaven upon earth. For what indeed deserves the name of life, when we have not his face, with favour shining upon us? but when he shall be pleased to admit us into all the treasures of his goodness and love; and fill us all over, as full as ever we can hold, with his blessed self, given us for our own; and, by his holy image perfected on our souls, fit us to perceive, and to receive all that bliss into ourselves: then joy must needs be full indeed: such a joy, as we might read, and hear, and think of, but never saw, nor felt, nor understood before. For

There's a house, God's dwelling-place: our Saviour calls it, his Father's house: the court and resort of the eternal heavenly King. For royal state, O how far surpassing all the most splendid palaces of princes! a house as large as the whole heavens: in which are many mansions and apartments: though no eating, drinking, sleeping, or troublesome watching: yet still all the pleasure of feasting, without any the hurt or pains: the sweetest repose, without dosing: and perpetual seeing, and enjoying the King of heaven, with all raptures of rejoicing and triumph.

There's a paradise of delights: the garden of God; seated and fitted all for pleasure: his own plan and preparation; to entertain and surprise his beloved. And O what cannot the creating power of God do; to exceed all that ever can be modelled or fancied in the world! now what is this paradise, my soul, but the joy of our Lord, which will pleasure us wholly; and that every way, both in soul and body? there shalt thou be pleased in thy understanding, will, and memory. Thy mind shall see him face to face; whom no man here hath seen, or can see. Then shalt thou be fortified for it; and take a delight, more than can be told, in it: to see the most amiable glorious God; and in him, all that ever thou canst desire to behold. The whole world, and infinitely more than it contains, will there be the theatre, lying open to thy view: and thou shalt know nothing to sadden thee; but every thing, that may contribute to please thee. Thy will (that now restless, and insatiable faculty) shall there be satisfied, if love will please thee, if innocence will make thee easy, and if satisfaction itself will content thee. For there will be nothing but reciprocation of dearest love, between thee and thy God, and all the blessed. There will be innocence, without spot or blemish; and nothing that thy heart

heart can condemn thee for. But thou wilt be extremely pleased, to find, that thou art in all respects, as thou shouldest be; and that God himself takes pleasure in thee, and has nothing against thee. Thy memory will give no small addition to the joy: to record the history of all God's mercies and favours throughout thy life; the dangers thou hast got over; the hell thou hast escaped; the changes thou hast seen; the strange turns of Providence, that puzzled thee; and now to see the meaning and reasons of all! what a pleasure all this will give thee, thou must wait, even for a whole eternity to teach thee.

Nor shall the body go without its share in the pleasures of this paradise: but be glorious and immortal, vivacious, sprightly, and always easy; yea, experience a sweeter pleasure every moment, than ever it did in any festivity, or the most exalted fruitions of this life. There shall the eyes see that incarnate Saviour (above all the angels of God) to whom Solomon, in all his glory, would make but a very dull figure: and together with him, all that have been excellent in the earth, and (indeed) the worthies of the world; the glorified saints, illustrious, as so many glorious suns; and that infinite variety of beauties and wonders, which such a place, and such a company must needs afford; to ravish the beholders sight, which way soever they look. There shall the ears also be filled with such harmony, to which the most admired music on earth, was but a harsh jarring. The harps, and the new songs upon mount Sion, the warbling notes of the whole heavenly chorus; and the sweet accents, and charming melody flowing there from every tongue, are not to be attempted now by any expression, where they transcend even the loftiest flights of imagination.

There

There shall we indeed enjoy our friends; and find society, to the wishes of our hearts: such as we shall prize and love above any, that ever were dearest to us in our lives. The blessed God himself, who cheers all heaven, with the light of his countenance, and makes every face there shine, and every heart leap for joy, with the communication of himself; will give no check to this pleasure, by his supremacy, or his purity. Because he will be as wonderfully condescending to his creatures, as he is superlatively transcendent above them: and will put on those endearing relations of a father and a husband; to take off all servile dread: and turn it into ingenious confidence, and the sweetest delight. And there the guilty consciousness, which makes us hang back from the holy God, will all be cashiered; when we shall find ourselves completely conformable to him, and fitted for the closest communion with him: and then shall we be most joyful; and no where else in the world so pleased, as in him; when we can say, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*: O this blessed JESUS, whom I have so longed to see! now to see him, and be so nigh him, and dwell with him, and be welcomed to him, and dearly loved by him! how does it fill my heart with joy unspeakable, and full of glory? to find the kindness, which first he opened, and ever since, has been shewing to me, now perfected, and crowned in me! to hear him tell his very heart, and all the history of his love; and sweetly to experience his warm inclinations; how he sets himself to delight and comfort me! it makes my heart rejoice, and my bones flourish, like an herb. Lo, this is my God; I have waited for him; and he will save me. This is the Lord? I have waited for him: I will rejoice and be glad in his salvation.

Then shall we find, my soul, how much better it is, to be with Christ: and to be ever with the
Lord,

Lord, than to be any where else in the world. Yea, then, the angels, though of a nature superior to ours, if they rejoiced over a sinner, repenting on earth: how will they rejoice, to see that sinner, brought home to them in heaven! to see the gap made by the fall of angels, filled up again, by the accession of as many glorified saints. But angels and saints together make up but one family, and the same household of God: in whose fellowship we shall be easy and happy. Though they be so great and noble, above the biggest of earthly princes; yet shall we have large souls, to qualify us for such high conversation. And then it will not put us upon the stretch, as a thing above our reach; but be even connatural with us, as a thing most agreeable to us.

There all will be most happy: and not an agrieved or complaining person; to make us in pain for them: no, but all still heal and gay, prosperous and flourishing, pleased and transported; all over easy, and at the very top of their utmost wishes. And to see all so well, and hear all so glad: to rejoice evermore, with them that do rejoice: and to have none about us, but such as will make us glad, to see them as happy and chearful as ourselves! O how different is this from the present world? and how worthy of that heavenly country, which is replenished with such most desirable company! there all are wise, and well acquainted with the ways of address, and acceptable carriage: all full of light, to understand us, and instruct us. And yet the greatest parts, without any pride: learning, without assuming: sharpness, without shrewdness: and depth, without fetches: to teach, without upbraiding us; and helpful to us, without putting upon us. And there is the good company indeed: without any the guile or defects, that now, in some measure, cleave even to the best. Company, for
which

which we shall really be the better : and joyfull experience, what they are good for : and find abundant cause to boast their goodness. Yea, there is the company, that is fair, without any offence ; or any rugged manners, to give the least disturbance all holding together, as the fastest friends ; and free and open, without any closeness, or reserves. Among whom, we shall know all ; and dare tell all : and not go in fear of any : but be bold every where and take sweet counsel with all. Because there is no such thing, as a dangerous temper ; nor any ever out of humour : but all free, and candid, plain and hearty ; acting still with the greatest sincerity. And whether or not, there may be any peculiar leagues and friendships there, upon some peculiar suitableness and likeness, between some particular persons ; (where the gifts and accomplishments are so various :) whether there will be the Jonathans and the Johns, especial favourites and darlings ; and some confederations and correspondencies more than ordinary : it is enough for us to know, that no combinations or intimacies there shall be carried on by any, to the prejudice or distaste of the rest : but friendship there shall be in its highest acme, and very utmost perfection : having all the benefits and pleasures, without any the blemishes or inconveniencies, that here do attend it. There that love, which is the most delicious condiment and sauce of our lives, will be, as the very pulse of their souls ; and the perfumed air, in which they all breathe : even a love pure, without any filth of lust : discreet, without any dotage : cordial, without any bye-respects : intense, without any strangeness : and constant, without any pets or unkindness. There shall we every one love much ; and be loved as much again. Every one shall be sweet and obliging ; and even wholly bent upon all that is pleasing. There is the land of the truly loving, as well as the land
of

of the truly living. Where we shall see cause to love all about us : and never fear to lose our love ; but find as quick and warm returns : yea, and have all this love, free from any the sin or the smart, that here hangs after it. And though still most highly pleased, with the mutual love of all the fairest and the best ; yet no need ever to fear the excess of it ; or any danger to come by it. And had we now but this one consideration, to entertain our thoughts with, of all the blessed company in heaven : yet we could not but conclude, even from hence ; that there must needs be the fulness of joy.

But there is yet a farther consideration, my soul, which still more enhances the heavenly bliss ; even this, that it is everlasting. For to think of losing it, would much diminish from it. But in heaven, that danger is surmounted : and the blessed there are got above it. There are they safe and sure : and provided for, with an inheritance, that will not grow less or worse. For he that gave it to them, will not take it from them : because he is the Lord, that changes not : but loves them, with an everlasting love. Nor is it possible, they should turn themselves out of it : because they know full well, they can never be better : and they are wiser, than to change for the worse. Yea, they cannot part with it, but it must be their sin and fault : and there is no sin or fault then, whereof they can be guilty ; when all the causes of sin, will be for ever removed. Therefore, can nothing there happen, to interrupt the joy, or put a stop to the felicity. But it will be still a circle of fresh delights ; a permanent beatitude ; an ever-enduring substance, without any fear of loss or decay. And this is the heaven of heavens, that it will never be ended ; that it is the life everlasting, glory that fades not away, and pleasure for evermore.

If then, my soul, thou art for that which is sweet and pleasant; O look out after the sweet, that will never turn sour, or bitter. And if a man will give all that he has, for his life: O what wilt thou not give; what wilt thou not do, to live most blessedly for ever? how hard soever it may seem, to climb up the everlasting hills; there is that at the top, which will soon make thee forget all the labour and sorrow. O strive then to enter the gate of life, and by a holy violence, to take the kingdom of heaven. And that thou mayest not build thy happiness, on any groundless presumptions; as ever thou hopest for the blessed ends, keep in the good and godly way, that has a tendency to bring thee thither. And when so many temptations and hazards lie betwixt thee and it, to cut thee short of it; and so insupportable will be the loss, to see others sit down in the kingdom of heaven, and thyself be thrust out; yea, to exchange the eternity of pleasures, for everlasting miseries: and so short and uncertain is the time here, that thou hast, to make sure of all: O may it awaken all thy care and concern, and engage thy utmost endeavour and application, to avoid the hindrance that would debar thee of the glorious prize; and to take and follow the right and sure ways, that will bring thee to be ever with the Lord. O let my faith and contemplation so get up and work above, as to fetch me in still better intelligence of the heavenly bliss and glory: let my mind so muse upon it, as to inflame my desires after it: and my heart be so fixed, where the true joys are to be found; that I may think nothing too much to do, or to endure: when it is for a crown, and a kingdom: for all that is great and good: for the perfection of bliss, and joy in the height; and that still to endure, without any end. O my soul, will not heaven make amends for all; though I pass through fire and water, to that
most

most wealthy place? no cause shall I find to complain; whatever it costs me, to work out my salvation: when-so very short a while, till all the trouble be over; and there will be nothing but ease, and pleasure, and transport, and triumph for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“ **A**FTER all that I have read and heard, and
 “ thought of the heavenly state, and the seat
 “ of bliss, the great object of my hope, and the
 “ blessed end of my faith: yet, O Lord, how poor
 “ and low are my conceptions of it? how dull and
 “ cold my affections to it? and how faint and lan-
 “ guid my pursuits after it? I am apt to think it
 “ good to be here; and to admire and love this
 “ world, and the creature-comforts in it: as if
 “ there were nothing better to be found. When,
 “ O Lord, thou knowest, what husks, and trash,
 “ and dross, and dung, are all the utmost enjoy-
 “ ments that earth can afford me, in comparison
 “ of the good things that accompany salvation,
 “ and all the infinite treasures and pleasures, to be
 “ enjoyed for ever in the kingdom of my God.
 “ O raise my faith and contemplation, to work
 “ above, and to bring me in still better intelligence
 “ of that better country. And shew me so much
 “ of heaven, that I may be more in love with it,
 “ and all upon it, and dissatisfied with every thing
 “ else, without it. O wean and loosen my heart
 “ from the things here below: and let me feel the
 “ powerful attraction of thy blessed Spirit to wind
 “ up, and engage my mind and affections heaven-
 “ ward: that there I may be still in the desire of
 “ my soul, and in the main stream of my conver-
 “ sation: till thou hast fetched me home to my
 “ Father’s

“ Father’s house; to the full body of all thy saints
 “ there joined together; and given me the so
 “ reviving admission into the joy of my Lord
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION XLVIII.

Of the paucity of such as shall be saved.

THAT the flock of Christ is a little flock; :
 few do find the narrow way which leads
 life: that men are passing on, in mighty shoals
 be for ever undone; and but a slender company
 that arrive safe at everlasting glory; are truths
 easily made out: but O how heavy and hard
 digest? I have not only the information of him
 who best understands the matter, but my own
 observation, to confirm me in the belief: that
 who go to ruin are very many, compared with
 those who escape it, that are such a few to
 other. When, alas, my soul, it is but here
 there one I can see, that does in earnest concern
 himself, for the saving of his soul: but the
 and hands, and hearts of most are engaged
 another way. And O how contrary to the good
 way of salvation, do the generality drive on!
 what an eye-sore is that very way to them?
 how unfrequented by them? nay, how many
 even defy, and deride, and scorn the only way
 that should save them? it is so cross to their
 humour that they cannot abide it. They will not
 so restrained. Now when I look upon my Brethren
 and see and hear, what they must be and do,

will be saved: and then look upon the world, to observe what the most are; and which way they take: can I think, that such do look likely for heaven? and that the course which they follow is hopeful for salvation? I would have all the charity possible for them: and it grieves my heart, that I can see no more in the fair way, to a better end. Even common humanity, and natural pity binds me to condole the misery; and sadly to resent the loss of so many souls, past all recovery. But yet I dare not give my Lord the lie; when he affirms that so many go in at the gate of destruction, for a few that hit upon the way of salvation. And somewhat farther have I yet to do, than to believe it, and bewail it: even to take such warning by the ruin of so many; that the case may never come to be my own. For that which hardens and heartens on careless and desperate sinners, to think, what a great deal of company they have with them, and how many of their party; it is indeed a consideration, enough to strike them down, and make them tremble; would they but lay it to heart, as they ought, and thus seriously bethink themselves; do so many go through the wide gate, and take the broad way to ruin? and are not we just like the common sort? alas, what do we more than others? and wherein do we exceed the rest? and how vain is it to reply upon our reprovers, I am not alone: do not others, nay almost every one do the same things? and should I be damned, God help a great many more; that, for ought I see, are but even all one as I am. O what silly prate is this? and as it were, asking our Lord; what would he have me to be so odd and conceited, as to leave the beaten path: and break company with the most? I have no mind to be so singular and precise; but even like the rest of my neighbours about me.

O my

O my soul, let me argue at quite another and thus put the case to myself, is the broad way to destruction, the common way of this world, and nothing more usual, than for men to be brought down and undo themselves? Let who will then turn all their eternal concerns upon such dangerous terms, as the imitation of the world, and the multitude: it makes me afraid in myself, when I perceive myself to stand upon a level with common men. And I cannot hug myself in as worth the mentioning, that I am not as bad as the worst; but much about one, with the worst sort. When Holy Scripture does assure me, that safety does not lie on their side: but they are going on to the place, where I would be loath to be their companion. And well may I suspect, that this is not right; when I am but as they are. I must leave that gang; and take another course, and set my face a new way: if I would walk upon good grounds, and glory in that grace, which makes me to differ. When amidst all the giants and rocks, and pirates, in the sea of this turbulent world, so slender is the number of souls that do escape shipwreck: when of the four score and three that are on ground, Matth. xiii. three were naught, and brought no fruit to perfection: when, if I take away the tares, that are no seekers at all: nor so much as pretend to take the way heaven-ward; but carry the open invitations of damnation upon them: and take away the hypocrites, that have only a name to live; and yet but make a shew and fluster; when they effect nothing, to please God, and save the soul; and leave away the fair honest men, (as they are called) whose highest attainment is fair dealing between man and man; and their religion and piety none at all: ah Lord! how poor a company I leave behind, of the generation of them that have the face of God; and in earnest attend the

ness, to work out their salvation? too plain do I see, that godliness is not the prevailing fashion of this world: but much out of request, and more out of use. The most being ashamed, but so much as to profess it: and yet a much more poorer company, that make conscience, and take delight, to practise it.

What is to be done then here, my soul? must I, in compliment to my neighbours, yield up myself to be undone? or shall I be jeered, and hooted out of my heavenly hopes, and my holy progress; because I stand so much alone, that none, to speak of, will be with me? shall I keep off from going, where my Lord and my conscience call me; lest I should hear of it to my reproach, and be twitted with it as a scandalous preciseness; and asked, am I wiser than all the world? If my needful obedience be thus made the objection against me; and I am called to account, why I will take upon me to exceed my neighbours; though my Lord asks me, what do I more than others? O how little should I regard their censures? and how much more does it concern me, to hearken to him, that will judge me, and that alone can save me? I would be sociable here, as far as I can: but I dread to stand, with the mighty throngs, at his left-hand. And that so few do find the way to life, must be none of my prejudice against it: but rather an awakening consideration, and continual remembrance, the more critically to examine myself, and the more narrowly to look to my ways: because for one that takes the right way, so many do miss it, and perish. Though the Lord's redeemed, that shall be saved, are said to be a "great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues," Rev. vii. 9. And what inhabitants may be in other parts of the universe, besides our globe of earth; and what numbers may be

be saved from thence, even to exceed all that are lost, I cannot take upon me to determine; yet I know, that our Lord himself, who makes the comparison between those that are saved, and those that perish, out of this world, Matth. vii. 13, 14. calls these many; and the other but a few. And this, I think, is apology enough for singularity from the worldly company; yea, and a loud alarm, to look to myself, and not rest satisfied, in being and doing as the most. Yet be not dejected, my soul, that the odds may seem still, many to one, against me: but remember how our Lord answered the curious question, Luke xiii. 23. "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He said, "strive to enter in at the strait gate." As who should say, trouble not thy head, about the number; but strive thou to enter, and so shalt thou make thyself sure to be one of them. Let me then watch and pray, and bestir me diligently in the way of my duty: and thus shall I remove the doubt and the dread; and find all sure on my side, that my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

THE PRAYER.

"**L**ORD, thou wouldest have all men to be saved: and every one in the world desires to be happy. But thy terms of salvation do not please the most: and O how few do like the holy way that leads to thy heavenly kingdom? how few but will run on after their own foolish and hurtful lusts, though it be to the final loss of their dear immortal souls? and in this case shall I be afraid to break company, lest I should be reproached with my singularity? O rather let me dread to be with the most: and suspect, that I am wrong, when but like the rest. O my Saviour! help me to follow thee, though it be not
" with

“with the multitude. Conduct me in the right
 “course heaven-ward: and how few partners so-
 “ever I have here; I shall there be filled with all
 “the best company, as well as with all the biggest
 “joy. Yea, when thou hast secured me from the
 “destruction, into which so many do fall; then
 “shall I the more rejoice in such peculiar mercy;
 “and glorify thy name for evermore. Amen.”

MEDITATION XLIX.

Of the difficulty to get to heaven.

IF the Lord's commands be not grievous, but his yoke easy, and his burden light; how comes the gate then to be so strait, and the way so narrow, that few can get through it? my soul, thou mayest tell the reason: for whatever our Lord does enjoin us, is very congruous to all that's uncorrupt and rational in us; and nothing more sweet and desirable to the willing and spiritual, who are bound for eternal life, and helped on with power from on high. But to flesh and blood, and nature unregenerate, all is cross and irksome, and the yoke rough and painful to the carnal and vicious, that are unaccustomed to it, and all set upon a contrary course. They that are used to filthy ways, and love to trudge through the mire, are prejudiced against the holy way, even because it is clean and undefiled. And be it never so much the better, yet does it not so well agree with them, because they must combat themselves, and thwart their own vile propensions, and get and keep in it. Their brutish lusts, and

wild passions, and sinful corruptions hanging cumbersome about them, do clog and hinder the entrance; and their running the race set before them. And hence comes all the trouble, to run against the tide of depraved nature, and to break our vitiated appetites, and overcome the ill principle in us, which is indeed against us; yea, all that we have with hard struggle, brought ourselves into the narrow way: though the grand obstacle be then removed, yet is not all the difficulty quitted; but new temptations, and fresh eruptions of the old corruptions, will make us still more wretched to hold what we have attained, and to recover what we have lost. Still our life here is a warfare and a tough conflict, with one interruption and impediment after another: that though we do clear our way before us, and like of it, and resolve upon it; yet, O how oft are we put beside it, and fain bewail ourselves, and repent our misdoings; and with much ado, get again into a state of safety and comfort? there must then diligence be given, make our calling and election sure; and there must be labouring for the meat that endures to everlasting life: and not only some lazy and tardy seeking, but earnest and timely striving, to enter into God's rest. There must be doing, to be saved; yea, patient continuance in well-doing, to obtain eternal life: and a working out of our own salvation, make sure of it. The slothful servant therefore is excluded, because he only cheapens, and offends somewhat; but he will not come up to the prize to take the glorious objects of his hopes, upon God's terms; when the terms are irreversibly settled, and not to be altered.

Here then, my soul, I am not to expect a way strowed with nothing but flowers, and a land flowing only with milk and honey; when godliness is a rose growing on the briers, and through many tribulations

tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven. O when did idle drones bring any great and worthy things to pass? and if riches and honours upon earth, much more the fulness and glories of heaven, will not be attained, but by the industrious and diligent. There must be climbing up God's holy hill, before we can reach to the ease, and pleasure, and security, and glory at the top. It is the most easy, to do wickedly: it is but to swim with the stream of flesh and blood; to follow the swing of corrupt nature, and do just as we are tempted and pushed on by the impetus of our own vicious inclinations. It is a way that has latitude and elbow-room enough, for whole armies even of the worst of God's enemies to expatiate in; and wide enough, for all the scum of a country to run down. They that are good for nothing else, yet can roll and tumble here. Any fool or sot, or the most infamous creature, can swear and swear, and talk filthily, and scoff at piety, and act disorderly, and ungodly! it costs a man nothing, to go that way, but just to follow the dictates of his own beastly or devilish humour. Therefore is it a way, so mightily thronged, by all that love their ease, more than their souls; and are more for pleasing themselves, than to please the Lord. 'Tis a way that takes with all the voluptuous and lascivious, the revengeful and malicious, the secure and lazy, that would be at no pains to seek after God, but count themselves happy folks to shake off the fetters of religion, to break the Lord's bands asunder, and cast away all his cords from them. It is according to the wishes of their hearts, to run on smooth, without any manner of interruption, after the bent of their lusts. They would have all, and do nothing. Would heaven but drop into their laps at last, so they might receive it; but they are not for putting forth themselves, by violence to take it. No, they would

would not be at any manner of trouble, not so much as of their prayers, to ask God's pardon and blessing, his grace and help. But will this ever do, to bring them to the blessed end? O how idle to imagine any such thing, my soul? when not a great deal more than so, not knowing, or wishing and woulding; no, nor doing of many things, will effect such a mighty purpose: not some slight touches of sorrow, or some faint purposes of amendment, or a few formal prayers, or some niggardly, grumbling alms; or hearing now and then a sermon; (more for custom and wantonness, than for any devotion or edification.) The crown of glory is not to be won, without more difficulty. There must be resisting of the devil, and ourselves too; striving against the stream of this world, and of our own flesh and blood: such care and contrivance, endeavour and application, brokenness of heart, humiliation, mortification, conversion, as not one in a great many, can ever find in his heart to go through. To go by the rules of God's Holy Word, and tread exact in virtue's line, which lies between two broad and dangerous extremes on both sides; like the sharp ridge of a long high hill, on the top of which it is hard to keep, and whence it is so easy to decline, and run down, to one side or the other! O how few will so narrowly look to their steps, and so circumspectly watch over their ways! it is rallied at, as pedantry; and cried out of, as impossible. But, my soul, it may be done, by the help of God's grace, in a manner acceptable in his sight; yea it must be done; and along the holy path thou must pass, or be eternally lost. If thou think of a thousand ways beside, never a one of them will carry thee safe to the heavenly kingdom. How then can I count it an easy matter, to secure the everlasting salvation of my soul? when my Lord has signified the difficulty, and bid me work out
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my salvation with fear and trembling: shall I take his Word, or hearken to a silly sinner, who devises new terms of his own head; crying, This is enough, and that will do the business; and making even as nothing, of the weightiest work in the world? after all the confidence, O how much suspicion still do these short cuts, and these easy ways carry, to be none of the right? for what is soft and delicate, and alluring to my carnal nature, I have the greatest cause to be afraid of. And no trouble will I stick at to escape everlasting misery? nor complain of any difficulty, that will bring me safe to the heavenly glory: if I may but be one of the happy few, that enter the gate, so hard to find; and hold on in the way, so hard to follow: till they are past all the danger, and come to rejoice for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“**B**LESSED GOD! thou knowest, how far short
 “ I come of deserving but the lowest room in
 “ thy kingdom, even after I have done my best.
 “ And yet, thou commandest me to strive for it,
 “ that there I may enter. And O what should I
 “ think much to do, or to endure, for such a glo-
 “ rious prize; which will infinitely recompense for
 “ all the trouble, that ever I can be at, in the ser-
 “ vice of my God; and will leave me no room to
 “ complain, whatever it costs me to work out my
 “ salvation. O give me, Lord, the zeal and for-
 “ titude, to grapple with all difficulties, and to sur-
 “ mount all dangers, in my way to that blessed
 “ end. And help me so to run, that I may obtain:
 “ and so to wrestle, and war, and conquer; that
 “ after the brunt and spurt is over, I may find rest
 “ and ease and transport, and triumph for ever-
 “ more. Amen.”

MEDITATION L.

Of the feasibility and easiness of Christianity.

MY Soul, when thou hearest of the yoke and burden of Christ, yet be not startled, nor run away affrighted, as if there were no enduring of either. For though 'tis true, he did not come to turn us loose, to live as we list; but has his laws for us, and commands to lay upon us: yet, O how great is the blessing and comfort, to have a place under him; and to be entertained among his retinue, and employed about his business, who is a Lord that delights in his servants welfare; and his very precepts carry part of their reward in hand, as well as the assurance of eternal glory to come: so far is his holy religion from being austere and grievous, that when I do but faithfully apply myself, to live after its rules, I find it full fraught with the sweetest content and delight. And therefore is it easy, because con-natural: for there's nothing so suited to my rational nature; and no inclination does it cross in me, but only those base vicious ones, that so abuse, and even brutify me. The more still I act as a man, the better still does it like me; and no peace or joy in the world, comparable to that which is found in the way of my duty. The very burden, indeed, is but like the ballast of a ship; that helps it to cut the waves more sure and steady; and keeps it still in the greater safety. So does this yoke, instead of galling, but make me regular; and by preventing my extravagance,

travagance, saves me from the worst of all grievance. It rids me of the tumults of lust, and the rings of passion; to make all quiet within doors: and also brings me under those laws of love, which like me all for doing good; and by that means, writes every one's kindness to me. Though many things my Lord does require of me; yet, O how many helps, to perform his pleasure, does he give me? by his Word and ordinances of worship; by conversation and example of his servants; by the fears of hell, and the hopes of heaven; by the principles of love, and the guardianship of angels; the sweet incidents of kind providences; and all these, the aids of his Spirit of grace, to quicken my endeavours, and to proportion my abilities to his demands. O how much easier is the yoke of Christ, than the ritualty of Moses, the tyranny of the law, and the slavery of hell's cruel taskmaster; who makes even the broad way more troublesome to loose sinners, than the narrow is to the Lord's serious followers; yea, makes them take more pains to damn themselves, than might have saved the turn, to save their souls! and where they find nothing but ease and rest; alas, what do they do, but smart, and still fear of worse? when as the gracious God, by the restraints of his laws, the checks of conscience, and the sense of honour, and the dread of ruin, does hedge up the ways of sin; to fill them with briers and thorns, and uneasiness: and wicked men themselves are often the maddest upon those sinful things, that are fittest to be compassed: and so does the devil lead his vassals, as to make them grind in his mill, and love so to have it; taking it ill at any, that will offer to rescue them out of his clutches. But this while, the works of our Lord's religion are matters of love, and matters of heavenly delight: the Christian has nothing to do, but what he may

may find a noble pleasure and satisfaction in doing. Though strait is the gate, and hard get to heaven; because the incumbrance of natural ruction, and that crossness to the holy work, w is our guilt, often makes the thing seem tedious, which is joyful in itself: and ill men find n ado, and a heavy work to alter vicious courses, eradicate ungodly habits, and overcome their st inclinations to things forbidden: and O how dom do they prevail with themselves, but to n the experiment, what a thing the yoke of Christ nay, even the good man, when he has done his best, cannot so keep all the commands of God, that he will still be wanting in many particular, yet, O how happy is the recruit (which the go shews us) made by our faith, that unites us to Lord our strength and our Redeemer; and o our burden upon him, who has fulfilled all rig ousness for us; and also brings us to delight that law of God, which before we abhorred! i all things are possible to him that believes; tha possible so to do, as God in Christ, will graciously accept. And then how are we hearted on, to as well as we can: when this favour our blessed viour has procured for us, that all shall be taken from us, which proceeds from faith in h and a desire to please our God; who makes a n ciful allowance for our frailties, and promises to cept us in the Beloved, according to what we ha though we cannot attain to satisfy the law works? and, O how sweet is the encouragement and comfort here, to wait upon so indulgent a ther; that will so compassionate our failings; : spare us even as a man spares his own son t serves him! yea, what are all those injunctions, t sound most severe and terrible in our ears, to pent, and watch, and fast, and deny ourselves, : pluck out eyes, and cut off hands, and mortify
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members on earth; what, but the means to retrench our troublesome exorbitances; and to pare away such ugly painful excrescences, that are grown even all of a piece with us? so to reduce us to our true selves, and to the only happiness for us, which is to be found in our God.

Now here, my soul, be wise for thyself; and never hearken to incompetent judges, that cry out, what a weariness is in all the ways of holiness! for as long as they dote upon the world, and are bewitched with the love of their sins, and ravening after the meat for their lusts? alas, they are too full of somewhat else, to receive any better things, or to taste the hidden manna. But my Lord is pleased to shew me his service in another aspect; as the most excellent way in the world. And, O how infinitely does he outbid all that ever Satan, Mammon, or lust, can offer thee, my soul! so that if thou consult but even thy own ease; here wilt thou fix, and look no further; but go cheerfully away with what he lays upon thee; and let the world see, that I do not count myself uneasy in his service: and that I am not, as a slave, forced to it; but do make it my choice, to engage in it, even for the love of it; and am never better pleased, than when so concerned. Be there some present trouble of godliness; yet how quickly will that be over? yea, with what heavenly hopes and comforts is it mingled even in the mean time! and O how much is this to be preferred, before all the pleasures of sin; that have many imbittering ingredients now, confusion of face, oppression of guilt, stings of conscience here; and do lead down to everlasting sorrows hereafter? O never let me then trudge to hell, through the most filthy odious ways; when the ways which my Lord calls me to take, are so full of peace, and honour, and hope, and joy; and

will give me heart's-ease, even while I am upon them; and the most glorious salvation, when reach to the end of them.

THE PRAYER.

“**O** LORD! thou hast pleasure in the prosperity of thy servants; and thou do not set us on work to make us uneasy; but do us the greatest kindness. Though thy service is irksome and repugnant to the carnal nature and the mind distempered; yet nothing more agreeable and grateful to reason, and the soul that is brought into any good frame. And though without thee I can do nothing, yet through Christ strengthening me, I can do all and find a heavenly delight in the doing: for, the course of my duty, I have not only the most glorious eternal rewards before me, but a sweet satisfaction, and strong consolation, at present within me. And never am I better pleased with myself, than when most pleasing to my God. thou great Physician of souls, heal the disease yet hanging upon my soul; which make me, any time, sick of thy service, and to disrelish the best of entertainments. Yea, give me such power from on high, to enable me for the business which thou callest me, that I may rejoice in it as a strong man to run a race; and count it all my life and my joy, to be taken up in the work acceptable to my God; through Jesus Christ Amen.”

MEDITATION LI.

Of carnal pleasure.

PLEASURE is every one's darling; and who is not fond of it? who is not desirous to be fed? God, that made us to be happy, has planted in our nature, an earnest inclination after the pinels, whereof he has given us a capacity. So we cannot chuse but be pleased with it, and satisfaction in it. Yea, it is the pleasure of it, invites us on, to seek after it. And he that created so many pleasurable things for us, does envy our pleasure in them; but allows us to them: and knows, that we cannot but find sure in the use. Yet there is, my soul, a wicked ing and loving of pleasure: when it is such ly pleasure, taken in the creatures, to affect the ly sense, and gratify the carnal mind, as is either ous in itself; or such as becomes criminal by excess and abuse. When men are all upon it, lease their throats, and bellies, and fancies; and e it the main design of their life, to honour the ly part, and indulge to the sensual appetite. en this pleasure is so made their end: that their hearts and souls are in it. And the ultimate e, which they propose to themselves, is to enjoy a pleasant time upon earth, and all their good gs now in hand. Nor do they use the pleasures, ncourage themselves in the chearful service of : but rather to flush themselves into wanton- and rebellion against him • and for the sake of him,

him, despise them; setting them, not only in competition with him, but above him; as if there were nothing in him, worthy to be admired and loved, comparable to what they find among his creatures to be enjoyed. This is the way of unregenerate, graceless sinners; who rise no higher, than to lick the dust; and pick up such a happiness, as they can find in the world out of God. But this their way, O how apparently is it their folly? for while they are so keen and eager in the quest of sinful pleasure; little do they find but disappointment and vexation; and a great deal more to burden their minds, and sadden their lives; than if they had never made the wild adventures of such, as are counted the masters of pleasure. And O how degrading is this pleasure (so pursued) to the heavenly soul of man! how much beneath the dignity of our nature! and how much more below the gravity of our holy calling! to make us, not only like, but inferior, to the beasts that perish; a disgrace to our kind: and a reproach to that blessed image of God, after which we were made. And when men will so slight their God, and their souls; for their bellies and their bodies: what wickedness then are they not ready for; to compass the sweet baits, for which they are so set upon? and yet after those baits are swallowed; what shall they find, but the hooks of guilt sticking behind? when this taking up with the creatures, leaves them short of heaven: and the stolen pleasures of a carnal life, will draw on the bitter pains of eternal death.

O then, my soul, how shy and cautious should I be, of turning myself loose to such pleasures, as irritate the lusts of the flesh, and damp me to the love of God? instead of fervency in the chase, and transport in the fruition of them; how indifferent should I be to them; and set myself to live above them? lest when ease and pleasure, is all my aim
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and intent ; I be but busy to make rods for myself ; and provide only for my own torment. And when I lie low, and troubled in the world, shall I then presently conclude myself undone ; no, but here rather, let me see and own the mercy of my Father, to keep me the safer from wicked excesses now ; and the likelier for glorious joys hereafter. And O how should it check my expectations from the creatures, that I may not be drilled on to over-love them, by the mighty matters that I reckon upon from them ; when, alas, no dram of consolation or relief can they minister, at such times, wherein I shall most need the comfort, as under the conscience of guilt ; or to thee, my departing soul ; or in the dreadful day of my last accounts. O what will all the sweet then prove, but even bitterness itself ?

Now, though I cannot but take delight in agreeable companions, and comfortable creatures ; and am to love his hand in all, who has made such variety of delectable things, for the sweetening of his servants passage, through this weary vale of mortality ; nor will I scruple to make use of them, and take pleasure in them, within the bounds of his holy fear, and the due care of my precious soul ; yet still will I remember what poor defective things they are ; and not hang and dote upon them, to make them the snares and traps, where I should fall and perish : to turn those things, which might have been for my good and solace, to my bane and anguish ; and make me curse the time that ever I had them, so to pervert and abuse them. O consider well, my soul, what the pleasures are, for whose sake I am tempted to part with my God, and quit my interest in all the happiness that he has for me. Are they not contradictory to that very reason, which makes me a man ? when not only Christianity, but even philosophy, and common ingenuity, may put me to the blush ; for seeking
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my satisfaction in such low attainments, as the beasts of the people take for their portion. I must be a fool, before I can put so excessive a rate upon them : when I shall certainly be cheated by them. For if they fill my belly ; yet never can they quiet my heart : but thou, my soul, wilt still be lean and meagre, amidst all this variety and plenty ; and if thou hast not better diet, none of the flat and sweet will promote, but rather hinder thy tranquillity. There shalt thou find more stings than honey ; and find that which is the epicure's only design, to be the least of his attainment : nay, that he is more disturbed and troubled, even than the regular and temperate liver ; who does escape, not only the surfeits and distempers ; but also the confusion of face, and gnawing of guilt, that haunt and harass the licentious sinner. O my soul, the laughing, and fooling, and shouting, and ranting, are no infallible demonstrations of true pleasure and rejoicing. No ; do not tell me, what noise and mirth there is ; but what cause men have for it. Seeing they may be pleasant, without reason, yea, and quite against it : when if they did but well ponder, how it were with them ; they would turn their tone, and howl, and roar, that they have no pardon secured to them, no hope in them ; nothing but judgment and hell before them. Godly men may have tears in their eyes, when the peace of God rules in their hearts. But to the wicked, there is no peace : and therefore all their gaieties and frolics, rise only from the ignorance of their case. And O how short is the triumph of such ; who eat and drink, and to-morrow they die. That which so pleases them now, shall please them but a little longer. Now they melt in pleasure : but presently the spurt is over. The pleasure will be gone, but not the dire effects. For after the sporting and laughing, comes the mourning and weeping, Luke vi. 25.

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When they that think all the bitterness past, will be brought to a new reckoning; and find the transient pleasures of sin, to be the most dear bought; for which they must pay the everlasting torments of hell.

O my soul, here stand, and pause upon it: am I addicted to any pleasure, that carries me away from God? be it idling, and fooling, diversions and pastimes, catering for dainties, contriving for fineries, inclining all to wanton conversation, and jocular companions? such foolish things, that may seem even as small as hairs, may yet make springs to catch me fast. And here lies my danger, if there be the person or thing in the world, that I cannot slight and trample; to win Christ, and keep myself in the love of God. My affections I must quite beat off from every forbidden object: and also abate and cool them so, to the very things which I may lawfully love; that nothing may ever usurp the seat of God in my heart.

O let my faith pierce, beyond this misty vale, into the heavenly regions above: where are the pleasures indeed; and such will be the same pleasures for evermore. And if God be here so kind, even to his enemies; O think, what he has prepared for his lovers. Canst thou imagine, my soul, that he will do more for the dogs under the table, than for the children of the family? it cannot be. No; Dives does not so much exceed Lazarus now; but Lazarus shall as much exceed Dives hereafter. And wicked men have not such great pleasures in this life; but the godly shall have a far more abundant portion of delights, in the life to come.

Now, wouldest thou have a pleasure, my soul, that is fit for a soul? and such a pleasure, that instead of betraying thee into evil, shall preserve thee from it? O taste and see then, how good the Lord is: acquaint thyself still more and more with the ways

ways of his religion, which are indeed ways of pleasantness. There fetch thy turns; and recreate thyself, as much as thou wilt. And no fear of excess or danger, by this best of all pleasure. For when I am but well with God; and have reason to believe, that he is pleased with me; yea, do feel the pleasure of his peace and love; O then, what a powerful tie is upon my heart; to make me proof against all temptations in the world, that would seduce me from my Lord! because I despair ever to mend myself elsewhere: and scorn to go to the devil's door for pleasure; when in the blessed God, I find so much better: yea, lothe those paultry, contemptible pleasures of the flesh, that would take me off the love of my supreme good, blessed for ever. Here I may be pleased indeed; and well afford to be merry; and rejoice with all my heart; and instead of some poor shadows of dying satisfactions, shall find heavenly delights, and everlasting consolations.

THE PRAYER.

“ **I** Read of such, as are lovers of pleasures more
 “ than lovers of God. And such, I must confess
 “ to thee, O Lord, that I myself have been;
 “ more taken with worldly diversions, and sinful
 “ pleasures, than with my supreme good, and the
 “ eternal fountain of all delight. O sweet Jesus!
 “ deaden my desires after these poor sorry gratifi-
 “ cations, that spring out of the earth; and give
 “ me a gust and relish of those sweeter and better,
 “ higher and nobler pleasures, suitable to my hea-
 “ venly soul, and to my holy profession; even, the
 “ pleasures of a serene and quiet mind, not clouded
 “ or clogged with guilt and dread; the pleasures
 “ of an upright conscience, that cheers me, for do-
 “ ing

“ ng my duty ; the pleasures of a heart that condemns me not, for falshood in thy covenant; the pleasures of a holy faith in my Saviour, a lively hope of heaven, and universal charity to all men ; the pleasures of pleasing my God, and living in thy love, and under the light of thy countenance, and filled with the ravishing foretaste of thy glory : which are pleasures indeed, and will be pleasures for evermore. Amen.”

MEDITATION LII.

Of the deceitfulness of the heart.

THAT the heart is deceitful above all things, my soul, I hear it from the Word of God, Jer. xvii. 9. And O how long and sad experience of it, have I found in myself? let who will predicate their inside; and boast what right and honest hearts they have: alas, how ignorant are they of them, that can so applaud them, or excuse for them? my own, I know too well, to trust it; and so much do I find amiss with it; that I dare not speak a good word for it. It is such a profound abyss, I am at a loss to reach to the bottom of it. And still is my heart the more suspicious; when it is so backward to be tried; and deceives me, even in the concealment of its deceits. Though all hearts are not deceitful alike; yet all in some measure: and neither education, nor grace itself, makes such a total change in this life, but that some remains of guile still lurk in the mind and will of every child of Adam. Therefore when the spirit

is said to be without guile. as Psal. xxxii. 2. I can only understand it, of a harboured and allowed guile; for such the regenerate, (it is true,) stand clear from. But whatever fine things any may tell of their right and clean hearts, the Lord know they are faulty: "and he putteth no trust even in his saints," Job xv. 15. "Let God be true, and every man a liar," Rom. iii. 4. "The old man is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts," Eph iv. 22. And somewhat of that old man, even every renewed man, as long as here he lives, will carry in him.

Now, if I trust to a broken staff, or to a perfidious man; they are both of them like to deceive me. And so weak and so false too is the heart; that trusting to it, I run the greatest hazard, to be deceived by it. When of itself, alas, it cannot so much as think a good thought, nor faithfully attend a short prayer; nor withstand any assault of the tempter: but it is trifling and roving; and when put to it, presently gone and vanquished. How faint in its purposes, even against the most undoing courses? and how apt to shuffle, and beat down all, with a wildness of thought; when the temptation comes, and looks inviting? how sly, and full of shifts and evasions, to palliate and hide its guilt from others? restraining the corruptions from scandalous eruptions; and so keeping close what is naught, in the deep of the heart: that men shall not know the worst; when it is so helped off and carried away, by some crafty conveyance. Nay, how does the heart, not only put fallacies upon others, to deceive them in their judgment of us; that they shall never truly know us: but also practise upon ourselves; to keep us from the sight of our sin and danger; and make us still our own compurgators and flatterers, to think we are better than we are; and to justify ourselves, when God's

Word

Word condemns us ; and to reckon all well, when he knows all is naught with us ?

It is not then, the favourable verdict of my heart, but his sentence, who is greater than my heart, that I must abide by. For if I think, I am not soured with this leaven, I do but abuse myself with that very thought : and am deceived, to conclude, that there is no deceit in me. For, alas, what safety, to believe an impostor, without any further testimony ? and how can I so be out of danger, even from the bosom-traitor, till I have begged of the Lord, to search and try me ; yea, to renew a right spirit within me : that by the candle of the Lord I may discover the Agag, which would be spared ; and by the sword of the Spirit, cut off that predominant lust, whereby I am most endangered : that the interest of God may be preserved in my heart : and albeit thorns and thistles will be springing up, even in the good ground ; yet, that they may not encroach upon the spirit of my mind ; to eat up the fat of the soil. But never let me plead my good intention, for any bad action : nor lay the fair colour of virtue, upon my deformed sins ; nor hang the evil of my ways, upon the circumstances of my case ; nor transfer away the blame, to throw it upon others ; nor plunge myself into any foul iniquity, because God is rich in mercy ; nor think, I may do some things ill, because I have done many things so well ; nor presume, all is safe, only because my heart preaches peace. When, alas, all these fine fetches, may prove, but so many branches of its cheats. And I must not look in muddy waters, for the true representation of my face ; nor be overconfident of a heart, that is so exceeding slippery and fraudulent : like the silly self-soothing creatures, that cry, They have it within ; when the goodness is not to be seen abroad ; and crack of the rectitude and soundness of their hearts ; though
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they shew us so little, or nothing, in their lives, & they are good for; but rather a quite contrary prospect. O let me go another way to work; arraign the traitor in my own breast; and endeavour to find out the evil in my own heart, bewail and groan under it, and judge myself for and instead of dissembling and cloaking the corruption, open my heart, to let it out, in humble confession; and cry to heaven, for such pardon, & healing of the distemper, that though it lie upon me, to trouble me, it may not be imputed unto me, to condemn me.

THE PRAYER.

“ **I** Arraign myself before thee, O LORD, & my heart, which is the chief, and should be the best part of all, is so tainted and polluted that I cannot bring any clean thing, out of thee which is so unclean: that I have so much cause to call in question that sincerity, which is the only attainment, that can be boasted here on earth, and that I stand condemned by my own heart for regarding iniquity in it, and for being false in the covenant of my God. O gracious God, forgive and heal this deceitfulness, whereof I have been guilty; and purify the fountain of action, that I may not harbour guile in my spirit, I approve my secretest thoughts to the Lord, and keep up truth in the inward parts, and be faithful even in the hidden man of the heart, as thou wilt mercifully accept in Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION LIII.

Of the hardness of the heart.

MY Soul, the hardness of heart, which God's Word thunders against, is not only the want of pity and compassion, for others necessities and miseries; or the want of melting sorrow, and tears at command, upon mournful occasions: for thus many, that shew far from cruel, and of a very relenting nature, yet may be exceeding hard, in the Scripture-sense; yea, and have the hearts of stone, that is, a great repugnancy to the holy ways of God, and pertinacious adhering to their sins, making no conscience to neglect the duties of religion, and still running on after their own lusts, and sticking to this vain wicked world; notwithstanding all the applications made by the Spirit of God, and the ministry of his Word, to bring them up to a heavenly mind and godly life. Not to hear God's voice, is to harden the heart, Psal. xcv. 7, 8. To withstand his motions, and reject his offers; to be stubborn and disobedient to the heavenly calls, and contemptuously put off the gracious warnings, as if they were but arrows shot against a wall of brass? and men were resolved to rule them, instead of being ruled by them. When backed and fortified by the strong man armed, keeping his palace; they defy the most powerful methods that are used, for their rescue out of such ill hands. So that, allure them with God's promises; they despise them. Denounce against them his judgments; they make even

even a jest of them. Preach to them his Word, and it is but seed cast among the rocks; they have not a tear, nor a sigh; for their poor, sinful, perishing souls. Though all is stark naught, and going to ruin with them, it is nothing regarded by them. They are dropt into such a dozing security, and so intoxicate with deluding pleasures, and influenced by common examples, and emboldened by licentious opinions, and tolled on with flattering presumptions, and come to be so resolved and rivetted in a sorry damnable case, by long habitual traversing up and down in their ungodly courses, till wickedness is grown familiar to them, and even as nothing with them.

And, for this sinful hardness, God is provoked to inflict the penal hardness; giving them up to their own hearts lusts, abandoning them over to themselves, and leaving them to be filthy still. And then strive never so much to do them good; they strive as much against it. Strike upon the anvils; and they do but beat back the hammer. No more impression to be made upon them, even than a seal makes upon a flint. They grow upon the patience of God: and "because sentence against their evil works is not executed speedily, their hearts are wholly set in them to do evil," Eccles. viii. 11. As if they could harden themselves against God, and prosper; or be able to deal with him, when he shall come upon them. O what slight thoughts have they of their sins, as if there were no hurt or danger in them? when they see multitudes of their party, and are platted in that ungodly society, which instead of dissuading from their wickedness, hearten them on in it, and applaud and commend them for it: they are ready to conclude, that all is well with them, because such as these, and their own obdurate hearts, have little or nothing to say against them. O here is the heart of stone, petrified, and adamant-

tine,

time, not to be pierced, always resisting the Holy Ghost, and every instrument that would work upon it. The hardened creatures will not yield, but bend all their forces still, to withstand whatever should do them good. The devil and his imps can draw them, even any way; but the Lord and his messengers shall find no credit, nor audience with them. No, the marbles will not weep: the stones will not melt. The stone in the kidney or bladder, that would make them cry and roar: but this stone in the heart, that is a sadder curse, they have no sense of it. Let the sun shine, and let the rain fall, upon the stones; still they hold their own, and are even as hard as they were. There is no yielding temper; nor any trembling under the Word of God. No, they are not to be dealt with: but too hard for ministers, and all the means of grace.

... Here is their victory: a sad victory! does it give them any cause to glory? ah Lord, pity and help the poor desperate wretches; and shew a miraculous power to do that, which all the world else cannot do for them. O my soul, bleed for such, as have no heart, to resent and bewail, their own saddest case. Groan and cry, for the most dreadful of all evils, that is coming upon them: and labour and strive with him that is able, so to turn them; that it may be turned away from them. Or else, the rocks and mountains, in which they now do lurk, will ere long fall down and crush them; to make them cry out of that, as too great to be borne; which now they slight, as too small to repent. Their consciences, that are over-grown with a hard crust, will be laid bare, and pared to the quick: to make them keenly feel their sins; as if needles were thrust into their eyes. O that they could (that they would,) lay it to heart, before it be too late! that in the fear of God, and care of their souls, they might flee from the wrath to
come:

come: and not by their hardness and impenitent hearts, go on to treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of righteous judgment of God.

THE PRAYER.

“MY Heart is hardened, through the defilement of sin. LORD, wilt thou break the rock, that the waters may gush out, and streams overflow. O take away the stony heart that makes me insensible of my sin and danger, and conquer the stubbornness of my heart, that makes me resist thy Word and Spirit. And give me the heart of flesh; to hear thy voice, to perceive my duty, and shew the greatest love to do it, acceptably before thee, through Christ Jesus. Amen.”

MEDITATION LIV.

Of the mischief and danger of ignorance.

HOWEVER some can make ignorance the apology for iniquity: and thus excuse their sin, that they did so bad, because they knew no better. And others can make it the promoter of zeal, the mother of devotion: (indeed, it is very fit to inflame the wild zeal, that out-runs the wit; and to be the mother of that devotion, which is made of foppery and superstition.) Yet after all the commendations of folly, and the fine things said for ignorance

ran

rance; my soul, dost thou not know, what the Word of God says against it? Jer. x. 25. "Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen, that know thee not." Isa. xxvii. 11. "It is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them, will not have mercy upon them; he that formed them, will shew them no favour." Hof. iv. 6. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." 2 Theff. i. 8. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire; taking vengeance on them that know not God. And to whom did he swear in his wrath, that they should not enter into rest, but to them that had not known his ways?" Psal. xcv. 10. O how wicked and ruining is that ignorance, in which many can immure themselves, as in their castle of defence; and and go blindfold upon hell, in their sinful darkness, down to utter darkness? for men must see their way before them, ere they are like to walk aright in it. And when so narrow is the way to life, that few do find it; sure those few must have their eyes opened. Indeed, illumination is some of the first work, in the sinner's conversion: and they must see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts, before they can be converted and healed." Matt. xiii. 15. Though, it is true, more is required of such, as have the greater capacities, and better means; yet there is a knowledge that cannot be wanted by any, that are but of common discretion, in order to their salvation: as to know, that God is; and in such a measure, what he is, as to instruct us, how to fear, and love, and trust, and worship, and serve him; to know our sin and misery by nature, and the way of our recovery by Jesus Christ; the glorious end of our faith and duty, and the dreadful consequence of our unbelief and disobedience. Such knowledge as this, is not only an ornament, and honour, and comfort, and great

advantage: but of the highest necessity, to keep us from our sins, and teach us to perform all our duties. For O what are they like to do well, that do they know not what? and what cannot the God of this world do with his blinded votaries; when he has them in the dark? my soul, are they like to be healed, because they know not what will cure them? or like to be saved, because they understand not the way of salvation? whatever allowance shall be made for invincible ignorance: "This is the condemnation, that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," John iii. 19. If he shall be "beaten with many stripes," who knew his Lord's will, and did it not: no fewer shall he be beaten with, who might have known his Lord's will, but would not know it, nor acquaint himself with the ways of God; because he had no mind to follow them: but was afraid to understand more; lest it should find him more to do: and so is ignorant, because he will be ignorant: not for want of an opportunity to be informed; but because he hates instruction, and is for keeping so unlearned. And then, that he has not the knowledge of God; is it not his shame, and also his sin, that threatens to be his ruin? let him be never so confident, that he is in the right: when, alas! he knows not whereabout he is: O how idle is he, to think of stumbling upon heaven, in the dark: when that inheritance of God's saints in light, remains only for his children, who walk in light, as children of light? wo then to them that take away the key of knowledge, and drive people from the Scriptures, and would have God's revealed will still to be kept secret, lest the mystery of their iniquity should be discovered. And wo to them also that are carried away with such delusions: for if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

O my

O my soul, let me not be unwise then; but understand what the will of the Lord is; yea, let me endeavour as much, and as far as I am able, to propagate and spread his knowledge also among others, to turn them from darkness to light; and so, reflect upon myself the light, which I let in among them: and still improve my own understanding by such imparting. For what the better, to know other things, and not the things of my peace? to know the motions of the stars, and not the motions of the Spirit of God? to know the secrets of nature and philosophy, and not the workings of grace and the secret of the Lord? to know the intrigues of state, and not the mysteries of Christ's kingdom within me? to know the history of the world, and not that of myself, what the Lord has done for my soul? how learned may men be, and cunning, in many matters; and yet to do their own souls good, and how to be saved, have no knowledge? O let me study the Holy Scriptures, that are able to make me wise unto salvation. And may I not have my part with such, as amidst all the plenty and abundance of means, can yet make shift still to be so strangely ignorant, that in their souls affairs, they scarce know so much as the right-hand from the left. But let me be desirous to know more, for this end, that I may do better. And that in the doing of my Lord's will, I may come to an experimental knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus: not only to have it by the hearing of the ear, from others, but by what I find and feel of it in my own soul. O let me continue asking the wisdom from above, which may at last bring me thither. That I may be taught of God, to understand all the things which are needful to make me holy here, and happy for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** How short is my knowledge of the light
 “ and helps that I have had to improve it?
 “ Blessed FATHER of lights, shine out with thy
 “ light and thy truth, more clearly upon my soul:
 “ that I may better know thee, and know how I
 “ shall believe, and what I shall do, according to
 “ thy will. And the light which thou art pleased
 “ to impart, O let me not put it under a bushel,
 “ nor live a contradiction to my own knowledge;
 “ but as the child of light, may I walk in it, and
 “ work by it, the things that please my God,
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION LV.

Of ill mens good opinion of themselves.

O My soul, dost thou know any better men and
 women in the world, than such as are most
 forward to be their own accusers? or any more
 corrupt and naught, than those that are readiest to
 rise up in their own defence and commendation?
 With me then, it goes a good way into the charac-
 ter of a sincere Christian, much to debase and cri-
 minate, judge, and condemn himself. As on the
 other hand, I cannot but take it for a shrewd suspi-
 cion of one in a sorry condition, that is used still to
 dissemble, and flourish off the evil of his heart and
 life; and commonly to clear and justify (if not ap-
 plaud)

plaud) himself: as if he were pure and innocent; even without any guilt or fault. Thus are some at pains, to paint a rotten post; to cast a fine cover over the filthy corruption; and indeed to discover their nakedness most of all, by their industrious striving thus to conceal it. While thus they shew, that they are yet in the old darkness; and still fast asleep in their sins: because they see nothing amiss; nor are come to reflect, and tell their dreams. And the more like they are to Laodicea, the worse still to be liked: when they say, as Rev. iii. 17. "They are rich, and increased with goods; and have need of nothing: and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Though the Lord knows, how bad it is with them, by nature; and by their own vain conversation, and evil doing; yet they seem to apprehend nothing of the matter, but carry, as if all were well on their side; when, alas, all is to naught with their souls: and as if they were none of the fallen and lost, whom Christ had need to come seek and save. How often dost thou see this, my soul, and grieve in secret, for many that seem never to grieve for themselves, but can bear it out brisk and jocund, as if they were in the bravest condition? and count it the greatest wrong, to be told, how much they are out of the right: crying out of the messenger of the Lord, who cries aloud, to tell them of their sins; What does he make of us? Though peradventure, he can scarce make so bad of them, as really they are, who have been so extremely out; and not only strangers, but enemies, even from the womb. Yet can they reckon upon all good and fair, from the very beginning; and no corruption will run out, till the boils are broken. No, they are touchy, and out of all patience, to have them rubbed upon; and cry, like the possessed with devils, Matth. viii. 29. "What have we to do

“do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou
 “come to torment us, before the time?” they
 would steal upon damnation, to escape the trouble
 of conversion. As long as dead in sin; alas, what
 sense have they of it? what eyes, to see it? what
 tongues, to confess it? what hearts, to bewail it?
 what concern about the matter? They will not be-
 lieve a word, (though it be the Word of God,) that
 makes against them; but conclude still, that
 all must needs succeed well in their case, because
 they love themselves; and so they would have it.
 What do they care, how much evil the Lord knows
 by them; if they can but get the world to think
 well of them? they will shipwreck their souls, to
 buoy up their credit. And though they be shame-
 less in sinning; yet are they ashamed of confessing,
 lest it should disparage and lose them; when as no-
 thing would, indeed, make it so apparent that there
 were any hopes of them. Yet, more are they con-
 cerned for hiding, than for mending the matter.
 Though still that very hiding does but betray them,
 because there is not a greater sinner, than he that
 makes so light of his sins, when his conscience is
 even like a piece of brawn that feels not the knife;
 yea, his heart like the anvil, that is never the softer
 for all the strokes.

O my soul, how contrary is this to the whole ge-
 neration of God's children? they are better taught,
 than so to affront their Lord, and fly in the face of
 heaven, that lays all the world down before God;
 and thunders most terribly, against such things as
 the hardened wretch can put off so easily. Instead
 of boasting themselves, they are in bitterness for
 their sins; and lothe themselves in their own sight,
 while the unhumiliated sinner is glorying in his shame;
 and asks, what harm have I done? who dare offer
 to accuse me? he must have his sins proved upon
 him: and will never plead guilty, till with very
 much

much ado, it be screwed and wrung out of him, and merely extorted from him. The holy apostle, he arraigns himself, and reads his own indictment, throughout Romans vii. crying out, "O wretched man that I am!" but can I expect it, my soul, to hear any of the devil's vassals so ingenuous, as to preach of themselves, and declare against the works of their master? No, he that has the power over them, stops their mouths from uttering such kind of language; and will not suffer them so to shame the devil, or to flinch from his service.

But do the sturdy criminals think, that God has such need of them; he must take them into favour, before ever they are sensible, how they have offended? O how vain, how impudent is this, my soul! when, be sure, he will make them better to know themselves; yea, make their own wickedness correct them, and their backslidings reprove them; till they perceive and see, "what an evil thing it is," and bitter, that they have forsaken the Lord; "and that his fear was not in them," Jer. ii. 19. And O how wretched is their case, who never yet knew how wretched it was! how far are they from the kingdom of God, when they have not so much as fetched the first step towards it? and what help shall they find from the heavenly physician, who feel no spiritual sickness? what rest in the Saviour for their souls, that never came to him labouring and heavy laden? did he come to call such righteous ones! no, his business is, to set up the humbled, and to heal the broken hearted. And let this comfort thee, my soul, under the sharp feeling of thy sins, when they are ever before thy eyes, and press heavy upon thy heart; think not then the worse of thy case, but be glad that thou hast so much life and sense, and such a trouble upon thy spirit, as sends thee away to thy Saviour, and puts thee in a preparation for his salvation. Time was, thou couldest think

think all well, when all was amiss; but now art thou likelier, indeed, to have all well, because thou discernest what is amiss. And though it is no pleasant, yet it is a needful fight: for didest thou not see it, how couldest thou amend it! and if they that never knew the grace of God in truth, (to put fire under their pots, and heat them into such a troublesome concern for their sins,) can be so silly, as to hug themselves in that escape; and brag, what continual peace they have had; and none of these fears, and doubts, and sorrows; pitying thee, for having such a melancholy time. O my soul, do thou rather pity the poor senseless creatures, that are yet lying in their graves; and, if they do not sooner hear the voice of the Son of God, to rouse them into life and sense, must feel and smart for it eternally, when it will be too late for remedy. And be thou well contented, to abide the discipline of that good hand, which is thus plucking thee out of everlasting trouble; that thou mayest have all thy hell here; and after thy mourning a while for sin, be comforted with pleasure for evermore.

THE PRAYER.

“**D**ISCOVER me, O LORD, I pray thee, still
 “more and more to myself; and make me
 “to understand of a truth how it is with my soul;
 “that I may not flatter myself in my own eyes, nor
 “reckon myself to be, what I am not, or to have
 “what I have not; but let me perceive the worst of
 “my case; that I may seek in time, for the effectual
 “help. And when I have done my very best, yet
 “let me acknowledge, that I am unprofitable, and
 “sinful; and look to be justified and saved, only
 “by the free grace of God, through the redemption
 “of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION LVI.

Of the great danger to be insensible of our danger.

THE knowledge of the disease is counted some hopeful progress to the cure. And to see the dreadful precipice, and the burning fire just before us; (if we be not more brutish, even than the beasts themselves,) it will startle and stop us, from throwing ourselves upon a certain destruction. Where apparent dangers do threaten mens bodies or estates; they usually give the alarm, to awaken their care, and engage all their endeavours, for prevention. But O how few have eyes opened, and hearts softened, to regard the greatest of all perils that put the soul in hazard of everlasting ruin? here, alas, they that are in the most imminent danger, use to shew the least concern. "Babylon said in her heart, I " fit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see " no sorrow: when her plagues were coming in " one day; death, and mourning and famine; and " she was to be utterly burnt with fire," Rev. xviii. 7, 8. " And when the wicked do spring as the " grass; it is, that they shall be destroyed for " ever," Psal. xcii. 7. " When they shall say, Peace " and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon " them, as travail upon a woman with child; and " they shall not escape," 1 Thess. v. 3. The sinners self-flattery, and dozing security, O what does it, but drill them on upon the sad surprise, and fearful end? they are piling up about themselves, and daubing with untempered mortar, that wall which

will tumble down upon them and crush them pieces: they will perish, by the very wicked wherein they do strengthen themselves; and the worldly succours, on which they lean for their defence. When they settle upon their lees; they can find nothing to do for their souls, but sit idle, as if they were quite out of business, even before they have struck a stroke: their sloth rusts, and even eats them up; and when they make their refuge, and have no trust but that God's Word shall not prove true, and that they shall have peace, though they walk in the imaginations of their hearts: how does their confidence then betray them, till they are forced to feel what they would not be persuaded to fear? they deride the care of godly men, and scorn them as a company of cowardly fools, so to flee from the wrath when it comes, and work out their salvation with fear and trembling. What does any timorous Noah know such ado, and trouble himself and the world, building an ark, and preaching righteousness, when they see no deluge coming, nor any danger abroad? or come what will, "their wealth is their strength," Prov. xviii. 11. "And having much gotten, they laid up for many years; they cheer up their souls to take their ease, eat, drink and be merry," Luke xii. 19. They hate to disturb their jollity with frights of after-claps. They know what they do now enjoy, but they know not what shall come hereafter, and they will venture it. All the terror of the Lord shall not persuade them, to provide for it: no, they have somewhat else to do, and religion looks like a poor sneak, that comes a-begging upon them in their prosperity, and to interrupt their festivity; away with it, they have no work for it. Is this another main chance, that they have to look after, even to secure their worldly effects, and to make provision still for the ease of their dear flesh. Will

they are full, "they deny God; and ask, Who is "the Lord?" Prov. xxx. 9. As if they were never beholden to him, nor afraid of him. And so, running from the rock of their refuge; and thinking to support themselves on broken reeds, and to find shelter in brier bushes; no wonder they are caught, and exposed naked to all the distress and anguish, that comes like desolation, and a whirlwind, upon them. But being at ease, and lulled asleep on the world's lap, they will not stir till judgment come and overtake them: though wrath is gone out from the Lord against them; and they are told, how by their hardness and impenitent hearts, they treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath; yet all this is to them a contemptible scarecrow, and they will take no warning till the vengeance comes and enters their doors, and seizes their souls, and has them away to the place of execution.

O my soul, hear and fear: for these are the men (how high and frolic soever at present) that the Lord threatens to come and "search for with candles, and punish them that are so settled on their lees, that say in their hearts, The Lord will not do good or evil; (like a mere idol, that we need not be afraid of;) and to bring upon them that great day, which shall make them cry bitterly," Zeph. i. 12, 14, 15. And O how like is it to come as a snare upon them; that now put it far from them: "for he that hardeneth his heart, shall fall into mischief," Prov. xxviii. 14. "Wo to him, how well soever all now seems to be with him," Amos vi. 1. Wo to them that are at ease in Zion. How high soever they are puffed up: it is but by him that is pulling them into his condemnation; they are (as it were) imbosomed in the devil's arms; and so there must be a fearful waking time. And O how will they be consumed with
terrors,

terrors, when the execution of judgment shall open those eyes, which the denunciation could not? and when the wanton beasts, feeding in the pasture, shall be fetched out for slaughter? though the old man is quiet, as long as he has his will; "and when a strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace," Luke xi. 21. Yet let all look never so sure with them now, as if they had covenanted with death, and made an agreement with hell: alas, how soon will they find the league to be quite at an end, and all the assurance shattered to pieces?

My soul, tremble for them, and dread to be like them, and to have thy part with them. O what a killing consideration is it to see so many poor senseless creatures every where, ready to perish, and yet so blind and dull, and dead, and not at all to regard it! how shall I find a hearing with such as despise the warning? and who can pluck them out of the open jaws of ruin; when, instead of shunning, they are for tempting and daring the danger? O weep over them, and pray for them, to him that is able to bring them to themselves, and to himself: that the Lord may awaken them, and the Spirit of God convince them, and give them such a sight of their sin and danger before their eyes, that they may haste out of both, and escape for the life of their souls.

And though fear is said to have torment; yet here, my soul, see the reason of the wise man's aphorism, "happy is the man that feareth always," Prov. xxviii. 14. Because that fear is the scout and centinel of the soul, so to discover the dangers which shew their hideous faces, as to get far enough out of their reach, and to raise sufficient batteries and forces against their approach: and do thou so fear the worst, that thou mayest provide for the best. So fear him, who has power to kill and cast thee
into

into hell; that thou mayest not be slavishly afraid of enduring the hell, when thou art so tenderly afraid of offending the Lord.

THE PRAYER.

“**O** How light I made of the sins, that cost so dear as the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to expiate and atone for them! it is not the least mischief they have done me, to make me so insensible of the mischief, thus brought upon me. For the easier I can put them off, so much heavier is the charge of my guilt; and the bigger that danger, which threatens my soul. O Father of mercies! rouse my stupid soul, into a serious remembrance of my ways, and that affecting sense of my sins, which may bring me so to see and feel them now; that I may not lie under the weight and condemnation of them for ever, but through a deep and effectual humiliation, may be brought into the possession of thy great and everlasting salvation. Amen.”

MEDITATION LVII.

Of jesting at wickedness.

AMONG the world's vanities, I should have numbred the playhouse entertainments. For surely, my soul, the frequenters of the stage do but laugh at the Psalmist's precise care, not to fit with
vain

and persons: when so zealously devoted they are to the attendance on those persons, whose very calling is vanity. But indeed vanity is not the worst article against the plays, and their makers, their actors and promoters; which (after all the late experience of sweat and struggle to defend them) are generally such wretched instructors of the age, as to teach and credit nothing more than its profaneness and debauchery; and help to set the sparks of lust and passion all in a flame. When wit shall be made the paint and varnish, to spread beauty even over the foulest villany; and the taking plot and artifice is, to bring it still off with flying colours; and the chief of all the repast so fitted to men and women of carnal minds and loose lives; as to feed them with froth and dust; yea, and poison sent down in a relishing vehicle.

But this infection, alas, is not confined only to the theatre: no, it has spread itself much wider. And how fashionable now is the humour, to play and sport with the miscarriages (that is indeed, the miseries) of poor sinful men! to make ourselves merry with their worst harms; and laugh at that, which is the greatest matter of sorrow! to make sin the bauble, for diversion of the company, and some notorious pranks the piquant sauce of conversation! so that if some had not done so wickedly, others would not have known how to make themselves so merry. Men that have trampled down conscience, think they cannot be triumphant enough for the victory over such an enemy; unless they carry the darling humour to such a height; till they prove themselves even stark mad. And lest the fear of sin should cast any damp upon the revels of their society, they trump up that gamesome thing, for the only subject of their rejoicing; and are not a little pleased to get any thing by the end, that serves for the interest of God's biggest enemy. O how they roll

oll in the reflections on filthy lewdness; as the luxurious repast, which sets them all in a transport! and what does delight the swine, like their rooting in the mire! mimic apes are active only to play unlucky tricks. And the ungodly buffoons, have no such joy, as to fly even in the face of God; and run wantoning upon the place of torment. That which pierced the heart of our Lord Jesus, is like to break their hearts, only with laughing. So reconciled are they to the infernal monster, sin: that nothing makes them so wanton and playful, as that frightful thing, abhorred by all in the world, who do regard the Lord. O how facetious and witty would they be thought, for rejoicing in iniquity! when boldness indeed is most of the wit: and loud laughing, made the flourish for impudent sinning. They are aware, that broad speaking helps to break all that modesty, which is the guard of virtuous living. Therefore will they not spare that talent; but speak even just all one as goats and bears would do; if they could speak at all: nor do they think it enough, to pish and poogh at the thing, which God declares his wrath against: but the foul-mouthed creatures must set up for the devil's orators, to make music for their master; when he sees what egregious fools he can make of them all; that, like condemned malefactors singing and jingling their fetters, can make it their frolicksome exultation, to throw themselves into his dreadful condemnation.

But though obdurate wretches can so brave, and razed it out against the light of nature, and the sense of all that are wise and sober: when it is so unnatural, to make a game of that, which all the world, which are in their wits, agree to pronounce so bad and sad a thing: and would cast such a foul aspersion even on all society, as if every one were so much past shame, as themselves: O my soul, thou

thou canst not but see so much in them, as to make thee bless thyself from them. And I must be a prover of them, if I would not be confederate with them. I must behold the transgressors, and be grieved, and never speak but in sober sadness, at those scandalous abominations, which are the main foundation of their gaiety and drollery. For though I do not act just like them, yet should I shew myself to be one of the same strain, but to laugh along with them; and so help to protect the rebellion against heaven, and to countenance that, which is such abomination to the Lord. For when villany is made the fiddle of the company, O how do the most infamous limbs of mankind brisk up, and wax per and rampant, as if they had done no harm at all but some very obliging thing; so to please and rejoice the blades, and occasion all their mirth and laughter! O what good then to be done of them to reprove them, for that which so recommends them! it would be a new jest to them. And if an magistrate, that should make the offenders smart in their bodies, or any minister, that should throw fire into their consciences, will so betray his trust as to go and make sport with their vile misdoings how does this steel their faces; and make them proof against all other rebukes, as if then they might do wickedly, by authority: and laugh at every one else, as a silly impertinent momus, that must go and call them to account for the exploits which gave his worship, and the ghostly father, such a fine diversion. But if the very correctors of sin will make themselves some of the fools, to mock at it: they that so laugh, shall take their turns to weep: after they have made some others mourn at their horrid treason, to that glorious majesty which they represent.

O curse

O cursed sin! thou plague of the world, that hast not only undone poor mankind, but plundered them of their sense, as well as their innocence! that they should make merry with their doleful misery; and cut and wound themselves worst of all, when they have a mind to be most pleasant!

Go, ye bedlams, and applaud yourselves in the merry distraction; but do not you perceive a horror, twisting itself with that pleasure, to be the devil's jesters? and jocularly to bandy about that damnable matter, for which himself will once be your tormentor? my soul, bewail the desperate creatures, lost to all fear of God, and sense of good, that nothing but what affronts the Lord, and ruins souls, can please them. And were it not for their swearing, drunkenness, lewdness, and ungodly extravagance, there would be nothing but dulness, no music among them. My heart is in pain for them; and still the more, because I, and greater than I, cannot help them; but they will take the risk, and there is no stopping them: they will enjoy the frolic, though it cost them so dear, as the burning wrath of God, and the everlasting damnation of their souls.

THE PRAYER.

O GOD forbid, that I should ever make a mock of any sin, which was the price of my blessed Saviour's blood! but may such laughter of fools, rather fetch tears from my eyes. And turn, Lord, their mad laughter, into mourning, before the music be spoiled, in everlasting weeping and howling; that the desperate sots, who play with their damnation, may better bethink themselves, in so fleeing from the wrath

“ to come, that they may yet be made the wonder
 “ ful monuments of thy saving mercy in Jesu
 “ Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION LVIII.

Of scoffing at religion.

THE most commendable use that I know of far
 cast and raillery, is to run down ill manners;
 and put wickedness out of countenance, thus in
 deed, wit, (though never so sharp and keen,) may
 be well employed; when it is as the ax, laid to the
 root of that tree, which bears nothing, but what is
 poisonous and naught. But O what intolerable
 fauciness with the God of heaven, to turn the edge
 upon his holy Word, and his blessed Spirit; and
 throw scorn and contempt at such as he sets a work
 about his business! to make them ashamed of their
 Master; and make it a scandalous matter, to be
 found trusty and zealous in his service! to dress up
 the religious for such fools; that men may count it
 the most ridiculous thing, to be found in that garb;
 and not offer to follow Christ, nor go to heaven, for
 shame; to jeer and deride the only thing that
 should save their souls, and so joke and scoff at the
 way of salvation, as to put all that ever they are
 able, quite out of conceit with it. Yet might the
 sparks and drolls want a subject of merriment; had
 they nothing serious and sacred, to make their
 game. For what so tickles and transports them,
 as to expose the hateful name religion, for a dress
 fit to be worn only by some conceited antics, or
 pitiful

pitiful silly sneaks? nor can they tell how to be pleasant, but at the expence of God's honour, and the hazard of their own salvation; both which they will not stick to set to sale; for the poor satisfaction of putting their company all in laughter. And here some, whose stock of wit is even as slender as one could wish; yet must needs set up for wits, to gird at that which is their greatest eye-sore, and whet their own dulness upon God's holiness. Indeed, to set them down in the scorner's chair, and seek to laugh the children of God out of their fidelity and duty, is an easy attempt, fit for the man of pleasure, whose risibility may do some feats, where his rationality is never like to get any victory. For Christianity fears not the attacks of philosophy. But drollery carries a sort of charm, to engage the loose party. And so an Aristophanes, that with a bon-grace, will paint out religion and piety, for a piece of knavery or folly; and think he can catch up God in his Word, and dares put his tricks upon the Lord Almighty, and calls them to account, who begin to think of breaking with the devil, and deserting his service; what, repent, and be a sinner, and turn fool! O how is he admired then, as the libertine's oracle? And how does the humour take, and the squibs run round? and they whose desperate case inclines them to be atheists, grow then exorbitant, out of all measure; even so as to fly upon their Judge. And thus is the seat of the scornful (Κάθεδρα λομῶν) such a chair of pestilence, as throws infection all about: and none that are both of vicious dispositions, and also under prosperous circumstances, but they are ready to be proselytes. For this is the scorning, and contempt of the proud, and such as are at ease, who think themselves so well in the world, that it is below them to seek after God, when they are full and wanton, and not only frolic but malapert; and count it not
enough

enough to reject religion, but they must flout it to the bargain.

O my soul, dost thou not look with horror at these hardy champions, the sevenfold children of hell, that have so mastered conscience, and go to the very height of impudence, even to laugh blessed God himself in the face, and make the angels ashamed to give any deference to his holy Word but, who more ready than the worst, to abuse the better? and such as can sin without shame, are disgracing all that live more decent than themselves and to wreak their spleen at the holiness in order that would put themselves to confusion. As David's ungodly foes, heated with drink and rage together had their lampoons and catches upon the holy Word because he would not wickedly depart from his Word. A sore trial indeed of patience, is their insufferable insolence. Yet does my heart bleed for them, when they laugh never so loud. For I foresee the time, when the proud bits of dirt will be fair game to bite their tongues, and eat their words, and shivering before their Judge, between whom, and them, it will come to a trial of strength; and how unequal then will be the combat? they that roar and swagger, as if they would swear and drive God out of heaven, shall much sooner scoff and be driven themselves into hell. Though they make a pretence of jest, to hear the damnation threatened, it will be all the jest, to feel it inflicted. When the edges with which they have jested, shall strike into their souls, and the Lord shall have them in derision, laugh at their destruction; as they scorned his religion, and made a mock of his salvation. O will the pleasant humour then be dampt, and ever struck dead? and the comedy end in a tragedy, and all the laughing and fooling, squibs of wit, be turned into weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth!

THE PRAYER.

“ **A**RISE, O GOD, plead thy own cause:
 “ remember how the foolish man reproach-
 “ eth thee daily. Forget not the voice of thy ene-
 “ mies; and how the soul of thy servants is exceed-
 “ ingly filled with the scorning of those that are at
 “ ease, and with the contempt of the proud. Wilt
 “ thou suffer them, Lord, to strike at the apple of
 “ thine eye; and to make thy holy religion, the
 “ common subject of their bold derision? thou
 “ shalt laugh at them: for thou seest that their
 “ day is coming; the time, when thou wilt quite
 “ turn their tone, and so easily avenge thee of thy
 “ adversaries. But, O Lord, look upon the dis-
 “ tracted creatures in compassion, and pluck them
 “ out of the fire, which they are kindling about
 “ their own ears, for thy mercy’s sake. Amen.”

MEDITATION LIX.

Of the sad prevalence of drunken excesses.

THE Psalmist complained of old, the godly man
 ceases, and the faithful fail; but may not we
 now bewail it, my soul, that even the sober man is
 a kind of rarity; and such are not common to be
 found, that in their hearts, do hate debauchery? Is
 not drunkenness so much the fashion, and prevail-
 ing course of this world, that to give a check to
 the surging vice, seems such an attempt, as to stop
 a mighty

a mighty river with one's hand? Is it not become so usual, and modish, that common custom is alledged as the plea, for its justification? and who so offers to make any opposition, comes under censure, even for as ridiculous, and impertinent, as if he should go and throw himself in the breach, to keep back an overflowing inundation. Ah, Lord! how has the deluge over-run even all places, and all conditions of men, from the greatest to the meanest? yea, and mingled even with all the occasions and concerns of life? so that scarce any affair, even the most solemn (I had almost said, and sacred) can be transacted and dispatched, but drinking must be the bigger half of the business. Some plead, they must away upon business, when, alas, the main business is, to give new pledges to the grand enemy of souls, who thus gets them fast enough, and does more execution with bottles and pots, than men with all their swords and guns. The poor wretch counts it a high attainment, if he can but get money or credit, or friends, to be drunk. The great man thinks he has authority to throw away his superfluity in debauchery rather than charity. Nay, even the miser can spend, as if the world had none of his heart, to uncover his own, and his neighbours nakedness, that could grudge even a cup of small drink for the poors necessities. Some count it the only hospitality of their house to abuse their guests, in drinking them down, and then laughing them to scorn. And others think they are not made welcome, if not sent away with bigger loads than they can tell how to bear. The rustic can scarce go to market and sell his beast, but he must make himself one, and changes the corn that should support his house, for the drink that overthrows himself. Thus do many drink the tears of their family, and the blood of their creditors: they will have it, though others pay and smart for it. The man that
deals

deals in the world, cries his trade will be ruined, and he must even shut up and starve, if he do not as the rest, and sit at the drink to drive bargains, and draw in custom over the pot, and oblige the company in staying it out to the last; so that, it should seem, he must comply, or be an ass and a beggar; and so, according to his sense, there is a necessity of the sinning, or otherwise no living! indeed drunkenness itself is the greatest trade that many do drive. Another tells me, he must take his cups, or lose his friends: he must make one among his neighbours, or be hissed out of society for a churl, or a precisian, and nobody. If he do not tread the beaten tract, and go in the broad way, he shall be scorned, and it may be lampooned, for moping by himself. And must he hearken to a barking mormus, or a despised Jesus, more than to the jolly companions and brave blades, that quarter and sway the world, and bear down all before them? excuse him, he has no mind to be so singular, nor to make such a fool of himself, though it be for Christ's sake. And thus are some drawn into the fraternity, even to save their reputation; and, it may be, not only baffle their conscience, but cross their inclination to get into the fashion, that they may not be run down for scrupulous coxcombs, and flouted out of countenance, because they will not be beasts for company. Indeed drunkenness is just as right for an honour as the belly is for a god. However, that which once skulked in the dark (when men were drunk but in the night, 1 Thess. v. 7.) will not now be restrained within such bounds, but is grown bold enough to shew its ugly visage in broad daylight; and so can many reckon it their bravery to be so beastly, as if they did some noble exploit, to besot themselves and the company. And it were well, if some such as should teach their inferiors better manners, were not most mischievous in setting

ting them the worst of patterns, and debase their blood even to a level with the rascally herd : but whoever they be, that do make a scorn of sobriety, and labour to bring their abomination into reputation, God will make them know to their cost, that their ways are shameful, and not his ; yea, he will be ashamed of them, that were more ashamed of his holiness than of their own beastliness.

O my soul, wilt thou not mourn in secret for the odious guilt, that so obtains in public ? shall not rivers of water run down mine eyes for the floods of excess, which such multitudes pour down their throats ? let them give me leave to bewail, what I cannot cure ; and not be angry, if that which makes them so merry, do make my heart heavy. Nay, let me labour (though in vain) to bring that under the deserved infamy, which will not admit of the offered remedy. For, alas, prescriptions to the drunkards, are even like characters written on the water, that go in and out, almost as fast as the liquor ; and it may be too late, to talk to them of reason, who have thrown it away from them. O how incapable are they of any sober counsels, who indulge to the voracious humour, and worse than brutish excesses ? how little moved, more than a brute, unless to choler, rather than to any better temper ? they go on singing and sporting in their clubs, when it would better become them, to be crying for their sins, and doing somewhat for the safety of their souls. But such, alas, do I use to see the maddest upon this diversion and pleasure, who can the worst afford it of any men in the world.

And to what purpose are all the evasions, whereby they would palliate the guilt, and bring themselves off, with their credit safe ? as, that they are not drunk, so long as they can but talk tolerable sense ; and so keep on their legs, as not to be seen in the beasts posture, on all four ? which indeed, describes

describes not so much the sin, as the effect and punishment. But if the brain be disturbed, and the heart overcharged, to unfit them for the service of God, they are guilty then of drunkenness, though not (as they call it) dead drunk. Nay, though they be such men of strength, as the drink is not strong enough to overthrow, I cannot say that they bear their liquor well, but indeed very ill, so to abuse both it and themselves, and still are covetous of it, and never so easy, as in the drunken places and companies; when they hanker after them, and do but laugh at them, and shew no manner of zeal and concern for the name of God so dishonoured, and poor souls undone by them; what are they then but some of them? let them plead that it is not for the drink, but for the sake of the company; and call that the good fellowship, which is really but a brotherhood in iniquity: O blessed God! what a company is that, to have a man at its mercy? what charms in such society, which is enough even to drive a godly man out of his wit, if he had not the wit, to keep away from them; though fools can rejoice in folly, and the drunken jargon, the confused din, their fulsome prate, is music to such ill-tuned souls; there is nothing grates harsher on his ears, than their accustomed obscenity and blasphemy. When these honest men pour out of the abundance of their lewd hearts, little but such filthiness, as sets all modest hearers on the rack; and these good men speak against the Lord so wickedly, and butcher his glorious name so unmercifully, that what they count their paradise, must needs be even as the mouth of hell, to any one that fears and loves God. Their choice recreation, cannot chuse but turn to his grievous vexation; and to be imprisoned among them, would be his worst goal, and house of correction.

Do they hurt none but themselves, who indeed tempt, harden and grieve, and sadden so many! when they disorder their families by unreasonable staying out; and after they come late home, instead of doing them any good in the worship of God, are quite past it, and fit only to torment and plague all about them; yea, whenever they awake into any serious mood, they cannot but be sensible, that if they had poured less drink down their throats, they should have had, not only more money in their purse, but more honour on their names, more wit in their heads, more health in their bodies; for certain, more grace in their hearts, more peace in their minds, and more hope of salvation for their souls. And how idly do they think of curing their sadness, with that very thing, which does but still add to it, by putting more stings into conscience, and loading themselves with the weight of guilt, as well as of drink? O my soul, how far am I from envying that merry life; which is indeed worse than a dog's life? not only for the dreadful rousing, which they will have, out of their fool's paradise, when brought to the heaviest of all their reckonings, yet to come; but even for the present uneasiness and trouble, that it costs them, so to serve their master; as to overload themselves, and disorder their lives, and craze their bodies, and confront their reason, and strangle their conscience, and lose all their best friends; and then to force a pleasure, whose itch presently turns to smart; and the draughts of excess breed loathsomeness and pain, inflammation and gravel. Thus do they run a round of sin and sorrow, where the devil proves quite too hard for them, coming to beg pleasure at his door; and gives them a scorpion for fish, and nothing but sore knocks, instead of all the expected joyful crops; and more cruciates and wearies them, in drudging for him, than if they
had

had been better employed, in the most needful and blessed work of the Lord.

Are they for driving away the time, which, alas, they could never keep pace with ; and which may fly quite too swift for them, and all be gone, before their great business be done ? let them spend never so little money, yet do they throw away what is infinitely more precious, the only opportunity which they have, to provide for a whole eternity ; a few minutes more of which, they may one day beg for, too late. They may count the time short, that is spent in such meetings, which they would complain of, as very tedious, to be kept in much better. And never should I grudge to any, the refreshment of that which makes glad the heart of man, would they not so immerge and lose themselves in it, as quite to take off their appetite from the soul's provisions, and to stop them in the pursuit of all holy and heavenly comforts. But, alas, they are quite out of their element, any longer than guzzling, and feeding the lusts that war against their souls, and burying all that ever looked hopeful upon them ; nay, so fixed and hardened in the debauchery, as to make it their only joy and festivity ; and not only repeat it still, as oft as they have opportunity, but (to shew their vehement inclination, and affection, this way,) go over the excesses again in conceit ; and dress them out as a new entertainment for the fancy, that the remembrance and the talk of such doings may make them gay and merry, even at such times as they want the drink and the company. Thus also do they take the devil's trade out of his hands, to make sure of others, and poison all whom they can influence. Indeed, when the tempter has so besotted them, he may do even what he will with them. For they are ready bent, even for all wickedness, that have lost the guard and government of themselves. And then I wonder,

der, why that should pass for the fair excuse of any villany, which is its foul aggravation, that the man did it, when he was in his drink.

Thus, even with God's good creatures, may men so fill themselves, as to drive out all real and eternal good from their souls. And how do bodies here go after the souls, when they drink so many healths, till they quite drink away their own, and extinguish the lamp of life, with that which should have kept it in; yea, not only add drunkenness to thirst, but many times murder to drunkenness, and the dear fellowship breaks up in frays and bloodshed. Or going home from the drink, they drop into the water, and so are doubly drowned. Or after they have broke all sober bounds, ride madly away, and break their necks. Or though they escape such accidents; yet, O how soon will they be spilt on the ground, as they spill the drink on their lusts? when such hogheads they make of themselves, wherein to tun up even all that they can get; and sacrifice to worse than the Curtian gulf, which is but the more insatiable still, for being full fed; and never craves more, than when it has already too much; where one man devours as much, as might serve for the honest comfort of all the company. O how can such oppressing of nature, chuse but send them the faster to that sad place, whither so many have already rid post? where after all the pouring in without measure, they shall cry out in vain, but for one drop of water. How do they go the way, to drown their souls in perdition; like wasps lose their lives by plunging into sweet liquors? and all their antidote against the fearful after-claps, is only to be beasts, as long as they can. O miserable remedy! so to drink away the thoughts of their approaching misery!

Need I now go any further? when their own practice so paints them out, as the children of folly, contemptible

contemptible even to boys, and their own vile companions; but to sober, pious men, more lothsome than the basest thing that crawls, being such as were born men, but live brutes, only more brutishly; robbing themselves, not only of God's image, but of man's; and it is a disparagement even to the beasts, to be compared with them. For to be made so of God, is no fault; and the poor creatures know not when they have enough, they cannot be forced to take more than they need. While drunkards throw on still, to heighten the flame; not to supply their wants, but enrage their lusts. And then a wretched advantage they will have of a dog, only to be capable of a hell. Indeed they are fitter for the sword of justice, than the tongue of a preacher; and should be hampered as wild beasts, when they will metamorphose themselves into such. And O that some of those swords did not lie soaking in such puddles, till they grow rusted and blunted for doing any execution? and they that should reflect on the wickedness, can find no hands to punish that, which finds too much room in their own hearts!

But here, my soul, let my life as well as my tongue, condemn the sin. Let me not only speak against it, but fly from it. Whoever urges me to pour down; let me remember, that God commands me to be sober. And rather let me lose the whole gang (that may be better lost than found) than lose one blessed God, that is more than all; or lose one precious soul, that if once lost, can never be recovered. O let me not ruin my soul, with that which God made for the comfort of my body. Never let me sit at it, to make a bout of it; nor be at any tempter's beck, but still such a master of myself as to know my time, and keep due measure and decorum, to have no fellowship with the unfruitful, pernicious works of darkness, but rather
reprove

reprove them, and contribute all that ever I am able, to confound and suppress them.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** Blessed GOD! how art thou provoked
 “ daily, by such as most shamefully abuse thy
 “ overflowing mercies, to make them the occasions
 “ of all their foul excesses, and turn thy sweet
 “ bounty, into riotous luxury! that which should
 “ raise up their hearts, and fill them with thy holy
 “ praise, is spilt all upon their lusts, and serves only
 “ to sink and overwhelm their souls. Rebuke the
 “ beasts of the people, O Lord, and save them from
 “ perishing, in the bottomless gulf of insatiable ex-
 “ cess; and teach them so to abstain, out of sober
 “ choice, where plenty is before them, that they
 “ may not be forced to abstain, out of sad necessity,
 “ where they shall never have another drop. O
 “ bring this wretched world to better considera-
 “ tion; that sobriety may come more in reputa-
 “ tion; and to be temperate in all things, may not
 “ be made even the common scorn of all men; but
 “ that the general thirst may be after that spiritual
 “ drink, which shall be in us, a well of water
 “ springing up to everlasting life. Amen.”

MEDITATION LX.

Of the great wickedness of lewdness.

THAT which passeth off with so many, for a free humour, the easiness of conversation, a trick of youth, and matter of sport; my soul, consider it better, and thou wilt like it still the worse; not only as it is forbidden, and damned by his Word, who best knows how to pronounce of it; but also by reason of the evil and turpitude, that is inseparable from its own nature. For “adulteries and fornications defile a man,” Matth. xv. 19, 20. They make him a fordid creature, loathsome to God and man; yea, even to his own self. Though it is following the impetus and swing of nature; yet it is only of that nature, which makes men the children of wrath; that is, the nature is depraved and corrupt, which inclines a man to go all to naught and ruin, and sets his beastly desires above all his reason and religion, to shew how far he is gone from God; yea, how contrary grown to him, and what a rueful picture is drawn upon his soul, to efface that divine image there, after which he was created. Besides the contempt and odium upon the lewd wretches, that makes them the scorn and abhorrence of all good men that know them, and the straits and beggary, to which the chargeable lusts do often reduce them, and the plague upon their bodies, the rottenness in their bones, and such a beginning of hell’s fire in their flesh, as makes them, even while they are alive, worse than dead to themselves, and a public nuisance to the world:
the

the saddest part of all the story, is that war which fleshly lusts do wage against their souls, and the fearful havock they make upon them, to besot those souls, and take them quite off all that is worthy of a man, bringing them down to grovel and crawl, like snakes along the ground, and lick the dust of the earth; yea, making them subject to the power of the devil, and ready to sink into the pit of hell; and yet all this is good in their eyes, and they will be brutes and filthy still, committing all uncleanness with greediness: though it be that which a man can never answer to his own reason, but makes him go self-condemned as a base fool, and stings every conscience that has any life in it, and ruins all the hopes of heaven, into which, the Holy Scripture is express, that the unclean generation shall not enter: though it be a wickedness, plated with so many other sins, and drags after it the black chain of idleness, gluttony, drunkenness, luxury, pride, covetousness, wrath, vengeance, murder, stealing, lying, swearing, what not? any thing that helps on his lewd designs, the filthy creature is for: any thing that stands in the way of his inflamed lusts he will break through; and though shameful and tormenting punishments have been contrived and established for it in this world, among all nations upon earth, and the saddest reckoning remains in the world to come, when humouring the vile body will spill the precious soul, and whoremongers and adulterers God will so judge, that they will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; yet so does this wickedness infatuate the mind, that it bereaves one who gives himself up to it, even of himself, takes away his heart, and the discerning of a rational creature; to leave a brute beast, an impertinent ape, in the room of the man. And then he has no sense or wit, but only to lay traps and snares for himself, and to

bring about his own shame and smart. The fear of God is departed, where the unclean spirit takes up his lodging, and there impudence rushes in, to usurp the place of repentance; the jaded sinners so bearing it out, as if none were so much to blame, as they that offer to censure them. And thus do they contract the vile habit, the bold face, to carry on their trade with audaciousness and assurance.

But though they have the hardiness, to appear as proctors for the scandalous cause; and many fine things are in a readiness to be said for their darling; yet let not all this, my soul, ever induce thee to think a jot the better of that, which (in truth) is stark naught, and will certainly have a sorrowful end, in sad repentance, or in sadder torments. And if the lusts of uncleanness are the price of a soul; and such enjoyments will cost me the loss of my God: let the tempter then go, and find another fool to work upon. I will fear God, and remember not only the tremendous judgment into which he will bring me, but all the mighty obligations that he has laid upon me; and then argue, and put the case, like his faithful and approved servant, when tempted to lewdness, Gen. xxxix. 9. "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" O I abhor the motion: never will I be so concerned. No, my God! I will be thine; and possess my vessel in sanctification and honour, at the temple of thy blessed Spirit. And from fornication, and all such deadly sin, good Lord deliver me.

THE PRAYER.

"O Whither, LORD, are thy reasonable creatures sunk! and how are heavenly souls lost in filthy flesh! that men should count it all their heaven, to be beasts; and exceed even the
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" most falacious brutes, in heightening and pam-
 " pering of their lusts ! and though they are loth-
 " some, and come to shame, yet shall they be too
 " impudent, to be ashamed ? O thou that camest to
 " seek and to save that which was lost, wilt thou,
 " in thy abundant mercy, Lord, look after the lost
 " creatures ; who, else, are too far gone, ever to
 " look after thee ? O that they may remember
 " from whence they are fallen, and repent, and re-
 " turn, even for shame of the world, and for fear
 " of thy wrath, before their fire of lust be over-
 " taken with the fire of hell, and they not only be
 " lost in this world but for ever. O may the pre-
 " sent evil world come better to reflect, and consi-
 " der the dreadful overthrow of filthy Sodom,
 " made an ensample to those that should after live
 " so ungodly, and hear, and fear, and do more so
 " wickedly. Help us, Lord, to flee fornication,
 " even as damnation ; and let it not be so much
 " as named among us (as becomes Christians) un-
 " less to be stigmatized, and abominated, by all,
 " evermore. Amen."

MEDITATION LXI.

Of original corruption.

THAT our very nature is tainted and infected ;
 and we come defiled and sinful into the
 world, is the known doctrine of our church, in ho-
 milies, articles, catechism, and office of baptism.
 Nor does the church herein impose, any more than
 the Word of God obliges us to believe, " that we
 " were

“ were shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin,” Pſal. li. 5. “ By nature dead in ſin, and the children of wrath,” Eph. ii. 1, 3. And if David ſo pleaded guilty, and St. Paul after the ſame manner impeached himſelf and his brethren in Chriſt, O my ſoul, how can I reckon myſelf clear? and “ who can bring a clean thing out of the unclean?” Job xiv. 4. When “ by one man’s diſobedience, many were made ſinners; yea, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men, to condemnation,” Rom. v. 16, 19. Though I know what cavilling, and railing too, there is, at the doctrine; and many uſe the wit of their brains to frame arguments, and alſo ſhew the edge of their teeth to make invectives againſt it; as the dog would gnaw aſunder the cord, that ties him up; ſo are Pelagians and Socinians hard at work, to force themſelves from under the uneaſy confinement. And hideous outcries do they make, not only of ſlandering human nature, but of blaſpheming the divine. They reſent it, as too great a diſparagement, to be thought ſo corrupt and bad; and would be taken for innocent, even from the beginning; and all ſtill to have been well with them: as if they had not been born of women; but eſcaped the common fall and ſhipwreck of mankind. As Adam was for covering his tranſgreſſion: ſo are his children ſtill for ſewing together the fig-leaves, to cover their nakedneſs. And if they will at all own any ſores of nature; yet they are for ſkinning them over, and healing very ſlightly, without ever ſearching to the bottom; and conſtrue the degeneracy of their nature, as rather an apology for them, than any indictment againſt them.

But, no wonder they ſo blunder at things revealed, who are more determined by the writings of philoſophers, than by what is aſſerted in the Holy Scriptures: when fleſh and blood has not revealed it,

it, they will not endure it. And if they but against reason; then they think enough is said throw it quite out of doors, that no man of may any more defend such an absurdity.

But shall I, my soul, withstand God's revelation because of man's objection? must I renounce the revealed verity, because some will load it with difficulty? I know not what article of faith then I ever hold fast. But when it is such a truth, do not only hear, but feel; and it comes home to my own very sense and experience: shall any philosophical reasonings wrangle me out of it; though I cannot resolve the question (*videtur* *unde* whence the evil was derived: whether from soul formed in the body; or lighted as a spark from the souls of the parents: when the thing is evident, shall I deny it, because I cannot ascertain how it came to pass? if I see the house on fire I am sure there was a cause: though that light does not shew me how it began. And whatever I talk of (the *rasa tabula*) an indifferency by nature to virtue or vice: never could I find any thing; but all men inclined the wrong way by an abundance of work, by discipline, and the grace of God, to make any one better than the rest. An ill soil is the nature of man, running him to naught: and without a disposition to bear good; which, with very much ado, and against the native genius (if at all) it comes to prevail and flourish. I see the sad prospect of such ruins; as tell me too plain, from whence I am fallen. Though I can scarce tell what I was what I now am; any more than I can judge of rich wine, by the vinegar into which it is degenerated; yet may I find the reason in myself, cannot find out the whole of this matter; be it what it will, alas, my intellectuals are so maimed, that I hardly judge aright of other things, more open

lie before me. Though I know, all that God made was very good ; and man upright and holy, after his own blessed image ; yet how soon after, did he see the wickedness of man so great on the earth, that " every imagination of the thought of his " heart was only evil continually ? " Gen. vi. 5, 6. Our first parents that fell, and lost themselves, by abusing the freedom which God gave them ; they did not only represent, but they were, all mankind ; which is but still the same Adam, grown bigger. And their sin was not only imputed to us ; but it is inherent in us : and we are sinners, coming out of the loins of sinners. For O what better can such produce, but their like ? that which is born of the flesh is flesh. Streams can be no purer than the fountain. Even children of believers, though holy, with a federal sanctity, to give them a title to baptism ; yet are they so morally unclean, as to need that purgation. And none here escapes, that is naturally descended of Adam's offspring ; no, not one. God will not alter his purpose, nor stop the wheel of nature, that mankind should not be propagated in the same way which at first he appointed : though the sin of man coming between, has rendered that propagation sinful, and to condemnation.

Let me not then here, my soul, think to vindicate, and excuse myself, because I did not actually sin in Adam : when, alas, I make myself an accessory and party, in carrying on the apostacy and rebellion, and doing even the same things. To what purpose, to cry, I could not help it ? when I go on to do just like it ? and still do bear about me, the old man, the law in my members, the indwelling sin, the evil treasure of the heart, the body of this death, the root of bitterness, the sink of sin, the very fountain of all filthiness ; to pollute all that comes from me : and when I have all sin, radically
in

in my nature; and even as much desire to sin, as to quench my thirst. And what is so with my inclination, is not without my consent neither; but my will is false and perverse, as well as my mind dark and vain, my heart dull and hard, my conscience stupid, my passions mutinous, my affections brutish, and all out of frame; all disorderly, and to pieces, in my soul. I have not only sustained the loss of my primitive good, and that image of God, after which he created me, in righteousness, and true holiness, but have contracted such an incurvation to the earth, and so strong a bias to evil, as makes me averse to God, and not only impotent to good, but rather to withstand, than chuse, what is best for me. And does this now make the matter ever the better, but rather still the worse with me, that the bent of my nature carries me away from God; and I find in me such a contrariety to his holy law, yea, even in my heart, an antipathy to what is holy, and the mighty propensity to things hateful in his sight? for no better, alas, is it with me naturally; and then, be sure, this is none of God's work. No, the guilt is found upon me, and lies at my door. O let me not then charge God foolishly, as well as wickedly: for he will be justified, when he speaks, and clear when he judges. And though taking us, as he finds us, he might cut off the whole traiterous generation, for that guilt which makes us liable to his wrath and damnation; (as we would not stick to destroy a whole nest of serpents) yet does he not proceed to that extremity, but in judgment so remembers mercy, that he has made the remedy even as wide as the malady, and the salvation common, as well as the corruption; that, as in Adam all die, so in Christ, all should be made alive.

But yet, my soul, let me never make light of the evil of evils; nor offer to defend myself in that

garriſon

arrison, where the evil one works in the children of disobedience. For slight thoughts of natural corruption, and of our Saviour's redemption, use to go together. But let me grieve for the cause of all griefs; and see enough, to take down the plumes of my pride; when, the Lord knows, there is no health, no good in me. And let me come unto Christ Jesus, as beggared and undone; from the corruption of my first birth, concluding the necessity of my second: and in such a woful condition, the more longing to see the joy of his salvation, and then, however still I am pestered with remaining corruption, yet unto me, found in Christ Jesus, there shall be no condemnation; but as Pharaoh was drowned in the Red Sea, so shall this troubler of Israel be overwhelmed and lost, in the blood of my Redeemer. And I shall be no less complete in Christ, than I was ruinous in Adam; yea, though undone without him, yet believing in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

THE PRAYER.

“**T**HOU knowest, O LORD, that I am not
“ only come out of the loins of sinners, but
“ have trode in the steps of my sinful progeni-
“ tors, persisting in the guilt and keeping up the
“ rebellion of my first parents. So that thou
“ mightest justly impute their evil to me, because
“ of my participation in the same corruption,
“ which I still carry in me, and which has all over-
“ spread me, and shews its sad effects, even in every
“ part and faculty of me. O how am I degrad-
“ ed from the dignity, wherein I was created? how
“ low has sin laid me! O may I lay myself as low,
“ in the humbling of my soul for my sins. And
“ what

“ what I have lost in Adam, O God of all grace;
 “ repair to me, I beseech thee, in thy dear Son, my
 “ blessed Lord Redeemer. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXII.

Of reigning sin.

TO have sin dwelling in them, even as long as they dwell here in the flesh, is the sad portion even of all God's children, during their present abode in this world. And who can say, without adding to his sin, That he is free from it? but to have sin reign over them, and make slaves of them; to keep them at its beck, and under its power; these are the spots of such children as belong to another father, the devil's captives and vassals, whom he has at command, to go and come, do this or that, at his pleasure. Worldly and fleshly lusts are the edicts of sin's empire, by which the usurper tyrannizes over the children of disobedience, and carries it, even as a king, without check or controul; and not only, to keep them in bondage, but (as willing subjects) to chuse and love the slavery, and yield up themselves, for sin to rule over them, and be a law to them, and bind them in the fetters which they do not reluctate against, but even so would have it. Whereas the godly man, though pressed with strong temptations, and overpowered sometimes with sinful corruptions, yet has still a principle in him, that will never suffer him to turn on sin's side, nor to take its part. But whenever he is sold under it, or captivated by it, yet will he not sell himself to work it, nor like so to have it. No,
 his

his deliberate judgment will never vote for it, nor consent to it. But wicked men do follow it with all the desire of their souls, and a full propensity of their wills, even as the river runs fluently down its own channel. They are impetuously set upon it, and submit their members to drudge for it, and their projects and studies are busied, to fulfil the lusts of it. Yea, never do they count themselves easier in their life, than when so employed in the service of sin. It is their element, and all their paradise, there to roll and wallow. So that instead of resisting the evil motions (as Christ's faithful soldiers and servants) they embrace them with both hands; and the tempter can no faster throw his baits before them, but they are as ready to catch up and swallow them. Let sin bear sway, and domineer never so much, they have neither feeling of it, nor remorse for it; but, where it rules most, it is perceived least: they are insensible of the thralldom, and fearless of the danger: the gates being thrown open, and the walls battered down, the town then lies exposed for the enemies to make what havock they list. They are as much in servitude under the devil, even as any poor wretches under the Turks and Moors. And O how much worse, to lie at the mercy of hell's jailor, and to have such a damned creature for their lord and master? whose commands are numerous, without any end; and rigorous, against all reason, to grind in his mill, and carry his burdens, and toil in his service; yet get nothing by it but confounded faces and broken bones, and shameful disappointments, and terrified consciences, and the most bitter after-chewings, to provoke God, and lose heaven, and make themselves hell's prisoners, obliged to the damnation everlasting. All this notwithstanding, they labour, and moil on; and when the SON of GOD would set them free, they have no mind to it; but rather make head

and resistance against him, that would bind the strong man and cast him out; and where they might have liberty and recovery, will not accept the offered deliverance and salvation. Because the devil humours them, and fawns upon them; and will not play the roaring lion with them, where he thinks himself sure of them.

O my soul, see here, how idle is the sinner's evasion, who thinks to bring himself off at the very worst, by hiding in the crowd, and crying, All are sinners, and so am I. As if there were no distinction to be made between sinners and sinners; between the obstinate, hardened, enslaved, and resolved sinners; and the penitent, returning, believing, and tender-hearted sinners; when, God knows, the difference is as vast and wide, even as between heaven and hell. And some sinners shall hear, Come ye blessed; and other sinners shall hear, Depart ye cursed. The one sort shall be pardoned, and live in eternal glory; the other sort shall be condemned, and perish everlastingly. And that, because they went on in their trespasses carelessly and wickedly, without repentance; and chose rather to be the servants of sin, than the Lord's freemen.

And here, my soul, who but the great Saviour, can be a mighty Deliverer? only he that has all power in heaven and earth, and is able to subdue all things to himself, can cast sin out of the throne, and bruise Satan under our feet. But yet (in my sphere) I must move and act, under my Lord. And I have my province to attend, and my work to do; to keep off the encroachments of sin, to suppress vicious inclination, and mortify the deeds of the body. For if here I sleep, the enemies tares will grow up, to top the corn. And if I get not ground of sin, sin will be getting ground of me. As long as I willingly suffer it to prevail, and do nothing that I could, to hinder its advance; I shall not then

see

see the face of God, with any peace; I shall not carry on the affairs of my soul, with any good success. But my inadvertence, and neglect to keep my heart, and make opposition, will lay me open, for an easy prey to the enemy. And O how shall I stand; if I do not what is in my power, to cut off the occasions of falling? and get out of the way of such temptations, as I find myself unable to deal with; and fortify my resolutions against the solicitations, by which I have been deluded, and betrayed into guilt, and shame, and dread, and sad remorse? yet must I not so depend upon any of my own achievements, as to presume I can do all of myself for my own defence, but go forth in the strength of my Lord, and make my moan to him, and believe the sufficiency to secure me that is in him, and expect my relief from him, and negotiate with him, and cry to him, and call upon him, who is greater than he that is in the world, and mightier than the most powerful corruptions in myself, that I may thus prevail, and obtain of him, who is almighty, to break the force which is too hard for me. That albeit I still carry about me the body of this death, yet sin may not reign in my mortal body, nor any iniquity have dominion over me; but that so free I may be made from sin as to become the servant of righteousness, the Lord's free man; and such a servant of his, as shall also be his dear child, pleasing to my God through Jesus Christ.

THE PRAYER.

“O LORD! how often have my sins been too
 “hard for me? how great a part have they
 “yet in me? and how predominant still are they
 “over me? great are the enemies of my soul, and
 “too strong for me to deal with; but thou, O
 “great

“ great God Almighty, who art able to subdue all
 “ things to thyself, magnify thy power in my weak-
 “ nefs; and let not sin reign in my mortal body,
 “ that I should obey it, in the lusts thereof. O
 “ let not thy enemies, Lord, keep under thy ser-
 “ vant. But make me so free from sin, that I may
 “ become the servant of righteousness; at liberty
 “ to follow thee in thy holy ways, and able to mas-
 “ ter my rebellious lusts; and so prevailing, by the
 “ power of thy sanctifying Spirit, that over all
 “ which assault and threaten my soul, I may have
 “ the victory, and thy name may have the glory,
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION LXIII.

Of the shamefulness of sin.

HOW grievous is it, O my soul, to see any
 grown to that height of impudence, as to
 think that their vileness becomes them; and reckon
 it their gallantry to do wickedly? and run into the
 lewd knot, to save their credit, that they may not
 be censured for despicable sneaks, and hissed out of
 society for offering to live godly, but pointed at for
 some of the blades that live above religion, and
 scorn to be so confined. The pious carriage towards
 God, is too poor and cringing for them; so should
 they lose themselves with many, that now count
 them considerable. And the stout sinner is tied up,
 from turning to the Lord, lest he should be thought
 to turn fool. To be twitted with his religion, and
 called one of the godly, and jeered at for Christ's
 fake,

e, it will never down with his proud stomach; it is, he will not go to heaven for shame, lest he should hear of it, to his reproach; but to turn in ink lustily, shall pass for a noble quality; to swear I fly in the face of God, a brave courage; to ask and act all villany, the fine sparkishness and very ingenious shame, is a covering out of fashion with the hardened wretch, who is ashamed of nothing more, than to be so ashamed! "Were they ashamed, when they had committed abomination? saith the Lord," Jer. vi. 15. "Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." And, chap. iii. 3. "Thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed." And, Isa. xlv. 9. "They see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed." They shut their eyes unto all that light, which would shew them their hines; and brazen it out and flourish it off, as they had done no harm at all, but some very glorious exploits.

But however any may glory in their shame; sure their pranks are nevertheless shameful, because themselves are so shameless. No, they act silly, and base, and dirty: and after all their raised expectations of a mighty harvest, they shall reap nothing, but a crop of disappointment and confusion. And then, after sowing wheat, and finding nothing but "thorns, they shall be ashamed of the revenues," Jer. xii. 13. O, my soul, shall their lies make me ashamed? if they will go, and all besmear their faces with dirt and dung; and then jeer me for being out of their fashion; must this oblige me to be and do like them? Will I be hindered by them in the course of my religion; any more than I would be stopt on a journey by the most important business in the world, by a company of rude children, shouting in my way? no, scorn their scorns: and when they seem so past themselves; I am ashamed for them; that any

men

men of note or sense should debase themselves; to quarrel at such low, wretched game; and so make boys and brutes of themselves; to go and herd with the rascally rout; which even any spirit, or ingenuity might teach them to be ashamed of. And I doubt not, but they go conscious and confounded, within themselves; even when they bear it out with such a bold face before the world. Therefore, are many of their works of darkness, for seeking corners, and sculking in private. And even all the wickedness, they use to disguise it, and put some fine paint over it; as counting it too ugly, to appear just like itself, but it must pass under some other name than its own; and be called thirst, or great spirit, a kind heart or pleasant temper, good humour, or good fellowship, &c. any thing to palliate, and a little to hide the nakedness and shame. But call it what they will; and conceal or adorn it, all that ever they can: still it is the very same, and not a jot the better; but themselves still so much the worse, to put that upon the world, for commendable, or passable; which God abhors: and his word brands, for abominable, and intolerable. They may get them a name, if they will; as Cain, and Saul, and Dives, and Judas did; to stigmatize them, while they are alive; and to leave a filthy stench behind them, when they are dead. But they must pass through the gulf of another shame; if ever they come to the Cape of good Hope. They must be ashamed of their sins; ere they shall have any comfortable grounds of expecting God's pardon. For as long as they can entertain themselves with their impiety, and debauchery and villany, as matters of merriment and drollery; they are gone, and lost. And then only do they indeed give hopes, when put to the blush. (*Erubuit, salva res est.*) To shew themselves abashed at all the abomination, that will be their highest commendation.

But whether they think fit to be so ashamed, or
not;

not; "the wicked is lothsome, and cometh to shame," Prov. xiii. 5. No better effect can ever come of such doings. For sin and shame are twins, that entered the world together, and no sooner had our first parents sinned, but they were ashamed; and sought to hide that shame with the leaves, which they had uncovered with the fruit. As long as we are ourselves, sin will make us ashamed of ourselves: though there be no eyes but our own; to observe it. So that we are not secure, even in the greatest privacy; while we have but any conscience in us, for the spy; to find us out, and put us to confusion. A generous confidence and assurance rises from integrity and worthy actions; that we can hold up our heads, and shew our faces with courage, before God and man. But to be wicked, is to go self-condemned; as also odious to heaven; yea, and contemptible before the world. For how low does the credit of ungodly men run, among all the sober part of the world! how are they judged, and despised, by all men of understanding? nay, even such as applaud them, and join in their rants and excesses with them, yet do not care to trust them: nor can really honour, but condemn them, in their hearts. Ah, who does not see their deformity, and shame? how often do their works of darkness so come to light, as to put them to open shame, even in this world; where they go branded then, as the public talk and scorn. And how cheap is the vile wretch? and how does he lose himself even in the present evil world; by following the things that are of no good report? yea even they that are too like him can yet scarce afford a good word for him. But however close and clandestinely any may carry their iniquity; all will come out at last, to their utter confusion. Even after they have slept in the dust of the earth, and all seems long forgotten, "they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt," Dan. xii. 2. Some that now hold up their heads high, shall
not

not be able then to shew their faces : but all their stately building on the sands, will down, and have a shameful fall.

Let me not then vainly imagine, my soul, that any praise of men shall bring me off, for sinning against the Lord : But let me take shame to myself ; before he put me to open shame for it. But when I do well and hear ill ; and am reproached for the name of Christ : never let me hang my head at the matter. For that black cloud, under which any good man may lie, will soon be dispersed : And after such eclipse he will but shine the brighter, Psal. xxxvii. 6. " God shall bring forth his righteousness, as the light ; and his judgment as the noon-day." So that they who diminish from his credit, do but crack their own ; and shall not long find belief. For true goodness does command a veneration, even from such as once had it in derision. Let me not be ashamed then of any poverty of estate, or deformity of body, or low parts of mind, or scoffs and reproaches of the world ; but only of that which is truly shameful before men, for being sinful against God. And so let me carry in all good conscience, and integrity, towards my Lord ; that I may not be shy of him now, nor ashamed before him, at his coming.

THE PRAYER.

" **I** Am ashamed of myself, holy God ; that I have
 " been so beguiled through the deceitfulness of
 " sin ; that I have been guilty of such folly, and sub-
 " mitted my soul to so base an enemy. I have not
 " only dishonoured my God, but also myself ; and
 " have done the things that I cannot answer to my
 " own reason ; and for which I am so upbraided by
 " my own conscious mind ; that the shame of my
 " face covers me : And I know not how to look to-
 " wards

“wards thy glorious Majesty, O Lord ; against whom
 “ I have most grievously misbehaved myself. But
 “ though this gives me sore trouble ; yet grant, I be-
 “ seech thee, that I may never be hardened, past the
 “ ingenious shame of offending ; that I may never
 “ have my part with such, as seek to make wicked-
 “ nefs creditable ; and to bring their abomination
 “ into reputation.. O dash their faces, and fill them
 “ with shame ; that they may seek thy name, O
 “ Lord ; that they may think it time, to give up
 “ such a scandalous cause, which can never be made
 “ good ; but disgraces and loses any (though the
 “ biggest) that espouse it. And may they seek the
 “ honour and glory, that is of God only, and comes
 “ of knowing the Lord, and of getting near to the
 “ most high, and being great and fair with God,
 “ through Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXIV.

Of the folly of wickedness.

THERE is scarce one in a hundred, but counts
 himself wise enough ; yea, the less knowledge
 some have, the more they think themselves to have.
 The men of the world would pass for the only men
 of understanding. When they but know how to
 save their stake, or to get and improve an estate ;
 they pity these religious fools, and laugh at the
 weakness of the believers on JESUS, that will leave
 their substance to seek after things out of sight, and
 things, no one knows when, to come. Now grant

we this world's children to be wise in their generation, and very shrewd and subtle to promote their temporal interests; yet, O my soul, what dunces are they, to learn Christ, and to know themselves? what bunglers and novices at the work of God, and to follow the way of salvation? here, even Rabbies, are often to seek; and the men of reach and subtilty, how much are they out? nay, even the wits, and masters of the finest parts, can sometimes shew themselves witty, only to play the fool, and make buffoons and madmen of themselves, to blaspheme their God, and throw dirt at their Judge. They that post up the serious followers of JESUS, for a herd of dull asses; and call it, playing the fool, to live by rule; and them a sheepish flock of silly precians, that will startle at sin, and make conscience of duty; and count nothing sharp and acute, but what is lewd and profane; while they would be thought so witty, for sporting with iniquity: the wisest man has turned the name of fool, upon them, "that make such a mock at sin," Prov. xiv. 9. And indeed, how deservedly? for who but the most egregious fools, would ever make a jesting business, of that which inflames the wrath of God, and cost the blood of Christ, and threatens the everlasting damnation of all their souls? who but a fool, would chuse to abide in grievous slavery; when he might enjoy a glorious liberty? who but a fool, would feed all upon trash and dirt, and carrion, when he might have wholesome diet, and fare well, and eat of the best? yet such a fool is the resolved sinner, to yield up himself captive to the devil, when the Son of God would set him free; and to prefer the humouring of his flesh, and the satisfactions of a dog, above angels food, and all that which pleases the most blessed God himself. And if the wisdom of God shall be heard, Psal. liii. 4. "The workers of iniquity have no knowledge."

1 Sam.

1 Sam. xiii. 15. "Thou hast done foolishly in not keeping the command of the Lord thy God." And Josh. vii. 15. "To transgress the covenant of the Lord, was to commit folly in Israel." Though ill men then, had rather hear profane, than silly; and will not endure the name, even when they do act the part of fools; yet, to do wickedly, is to do foolishly. And all such as, by their allowed sins, do make the Almighty their enemy; O what do they but make fools of themselves? thus the drunkard and adulterer are beastly fools, to make themselves base and ridiculous, if not poor and beggarly here; and expose themselves, to suffer and smart for it, eternally hereafter. The swearer is a mad fool; to defy his Lord, and sell his soul; not so much as to please his flesh, or to get the world. The ambitious is a proud fool; to scramble high that he may tumble down with the sorer fall. The revengeful is a furious fool; to put his own mind on the rack, that he may torment his neighbour. The spendthrift is a prodigal fool; to throw away altogether on his ravenous lusts, what might have been a constant supply for his honest needs. Yea, the worldling, that thinks he outwits all; and (among his like) grows famous for the wisdom of feathering his nest, yet is a miserly fool, that cares not to lose his friend, and deny his pleasure, and starve his body, and stretch his conscience, yea, and damn his soul; only to add to that heap, which he shall leave "in the midst of his days, and die a fool," Jer. xvii. 11. Though a man may himself, incur the censure of folly, to call the wealthy chuff, a fool; yet, he that knows him best, has put the feather in his cap. Luke xii. 20. "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." Though he had never so much laid up for many years, he was but a fool to trust to that, and not lay up in store a better foundation against the time to come, that

that he might have laid hold on eternal life. And, alas, who but a fool, would stick to a world, which in his sorest need, can do nothing at all for him, and the while, forsake that good, which alone is satisfying and everlasting? that is, to make mere shadow for substance, and prefer a moment before the duration that shall never end. And yet with such ill advice are things carried by the forsakers and despisers of God, as if they had not even the common understanding of men: and how cunning soever they may be to cater for the body, yet to do their souls good they have no knowledge. But a man of ordinary sense would be ashamed, so to negotiate for the affairs of the world, as they do in their heavenly and eternal concerns. Either to live as rovers, and fix on no determined end; or else never take the way, that is like to bring them to any good end. To make a great solemnity of trifles; and but play with the things of everlasting importance. To neglect the richest offers, while opportunity serves them; and then come in with their, *had we wist*, when all is gone by them. To take a spurt of sorry pleasure, instead of the highest pleasure for ever; yea, for a lick of honey to be drowned in the pot, past recovery; and for a few merry bouts, to incur the extremity of sorrow, that shall never be over. To carry it so here, as to find no friends or favour elsewhere. To have all in hand, and nothing to support and comfort them world without end.

O my soul, thou wilt not wonder, that God's Word so often lays folly to the charge of men wicked and worldly: for, when thou dost but make any observations upon their conduct, thou canst not chuse but see their weakness and shame all over. And after they have enjoyed the wild humour, and applauded their own wit, and taken all the liberty of upbraiding others folly, thou shalt one day hear them,

them, in the bitterness of their spirits, charging it home upon themselves: as Wisd. v. 5. "We fools counted the life of the righteous madness;" and thought with ourselves, what a fool was he, so to exercise and deny himself, and make such a stir with his religion? how wide did we err from the way of truth? and weary ourselves in the ways of wickedness, and destruction? we took pains, alas, only to lose our souls, and undo ourselves. And now, what is become of all the enjoyments, we were so proud of? what are we the better for that, which we so much valued ourselves upon, which now has utterly left us, as if we had never known it? O had we thought, it would have come to this; we would have filled our heads with another sort of care, and followed other business, and lived after another manner. But we did not take our time, while it offered itself; and now it is too late, when all is slipped away past recalling, and we must for ever rue it, under all the dreadful consequences of our folly. O my soul, to this it will come. Be thou so wise, as to foresee it, and provide against it. And as forward as any are, to call them fools for Christ, who will forsake the world, to follow their Lord; yea, and prefer the reproaches of Christ, before the riches of the earth; and the ways of godliness, above all the pleasures of sin: be not thou so hasty to fasten the folly, till thou seest where it is to be laid at the last, and hearest who will be fain to take it all to themselves; and to cry out, O wretched fools that we were, to hearken to the *father of lies*, more than to the wisdom of God; yea, more to the murderer of souls, than to the God of our salvation! we might have seen it; but we would not. No, we suffered our passions to blind us, and our lusts to lead us away, like fools to the correction; where we shall have leisure enough to look back, and repent the foolishness, and curse the madness, that has
now

now fastened us, where we were told, it would lead us, even past all hope of help.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** My GOD! I have done foolishly, as well
 “ as wickedly in departing from thee; and
 “ preferring this vain world, and my own sinful
 “ lusts before thee. So have I thought to mend
 “ myself; but the idle experiments have been to
 “ my own extreme loss, I see and own, and be-
 “ wail my silly weakness and foul mistakes. O
 “ that I may learn to be wiser, by such shameful
 “ disappointments, as I have found! that I may
 “ submit myself, to be taught of God, what is best
 “ to be done; and never think that I have any
 “ good reason, to take another way, than what
 “ thou dost prescribe. That I may know when I
 “ am well with thee; and not go break myself to
 “ pieces, in hunting after pleasures of the flesh, and
 “ advantages of the world, according to the sug-
 “ gestions and offers of the wicked tempter. O
 “ make me ever wise for my soul: though I may
 “ be accounted a fool for the world. Let thy fear,
 “ causing me to depart from evil, be my wisdom
 “ and understanding. And whatever wisdom any
 “ else may applaud themselves in, O give me that
 “ wisdom from above, which may lead and bring
 “ me thither, to be ever with the Lord. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXV.

Of the damnable sin of Worldliness.

O My soul, how light a matter does the world make of that evil; which (if there were no other,) yet is enough to undo all the world? even that worldly mind and life; which is the greatest contradiction to our Christian profession; and a full bar to our eternal salvation. For did not our "Lord Jesus give himself for us; that he might deliver us from this present evil world?" Gal. i. 4. And has he not forbid us, to lay up our treasure on earth, and to take any thought for our life and body; comparable to what we do, for our soul, and for heaven? Matt. vi. 19, 25. And has he not commanded us to forsake all, and follow him! yea, to count it but as dung, that we may win him? to remember, that as we are his members, we are not of the world! that chosen out of it, and divided from it? to consider ourselves, as strangers and pilgrims, and way-aring travellers; only journeying through this world to another; which is our own country; and the place of our rest and bliss? to set our affections on things above; not on things upon the earth? to have the things of this world, as if we had them not; and our conversation in heaven; and all our main traffic and negotiation in the kingdom that is invisible?

But O what nonsense and odious impertinence is all this, to a worldling, that has his heart glued and even pinned down to the ground; that counts it good to be here; lays about him, as if he should
never

never depart hence; looks no further than the ends of the earth; has no real concern beyond this life; and neither knows nor minds any happiness, but what is to be enjoyed on this side the grave. Yet such is the man that passes well in the world; yea, peradventure, is applauded for a wise and happy man: who looks to the main chance; and knows how to do himself good. Notwithstanding that the Lord says to such a one, "Thou fool!" Luke xii. 20. And tells him in the end of his days, "He shall die a fool." Jer. xvii. 11. Yet does the world not only vindicate, but extol him; as if he were the wisest, and the best man in the world: and who but he? for the world, "loves its own," John xv. 19. And they commend a man chiefly, for the very things, for which God's Word condemns him; and they bless the covetous, "whom the Lord abhorreth," Psal. x. 3. That covetousness, which he brands for idolatry, Col. iii. 4. they call it good husbandry: and, indeed, their common sentiments run so counter to Holy Scripture, that what is in highest esteem among them, is abomination in the sight of God. And should I shut up my Bible, to be determined only by their sense, and by the course of this world, I should then be tempted to conclude that there were no harm at all in the worldly disposition and conversation; but that it were rather one's duty, and a very praise-worthy property. But when I turn from them, to hear what is said by the Lord; O what a contrary notion do I there get of the matter? and such a startling account, as is enough to spoil all the worldling's rest and ease, in the warm nest of his dear possessions: had he but so much life and feeling, as to discern and admit any thing, that comes to interrupt him in the beloved way, upon which he is set. When as it is so positively pronounced, that
 "if

‘ if any man love the world ; the love of the Father is not in him,” 1 John ii. 15. And the adulterers and adulteresses are upbraided, for not knowing, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God : and the assertion is so flat and peremptory, that “ whosoever will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God,” James iv. 4.

Now if God’s word call worldliness idolatry, adultery, and enmity with him ; what the better can I account it, for all the fine names that any men put upon it ? when this is the mighty, successful engine, whereby the god of this world draws such multitudes of poor souls from the true God, and heaven, into their foul guilt, and his fearful condemnation. This is the taking bait, that is so little suspected : for because men must use it, they grow confident to run into the abuse. And seeing our heavenly Father knows, we have need of these things ; they plead that all is well ; though they manage them never so ill : and whoever offers to correct them, shall be thought to deserve more correction himself. Let them hear never so much from him, who tells them truths out of the holy book, that it is going a-whoring from the Lord : they arm themselves against such bitter truths, as they count so impracticable ; that should they go by them, no living in the world. When they have forsaken the heavenly bridegroom, to strike in with their darling mammon ; there do the wild amours run out into such excess, that they will not endure any check : But quite forgetting, that the world is one of those grand enemies of salvation, which they have solemnly vowed to renounce, most greedily they hunt after it ; and even take up with all their portion in it. Though the Lord has told them, that God and mammon are masters so incompatible, they cannot serve both. Matt. vi. 24. Yet the latter they will serve, whatever becomes of the service

of the other. And O what wretched shreds, and pitiful scraps shall the great Lord have, after they have given mammon all that they have a mind! when it has engrossed their thoughts, and their cares, their desires and delights; and so ingulfed and swallowed them up: the fascination then so humours, and entices, and charms, and catches them; that there they stick fast; and will not be retrieved and helped out: nay, that they think themselves to have no need of any such help: but cry, they care not for the world: they do not love it, not they: when yet it is most notorious, how eagerly they are addicted to it; and all dote upon it; never got the least above it; but still are quite held under by it, yea, so passionate after it, even as if they were all of a piece with it. And truly, to convince some worldlings, is one of the hardest tasks in the world: and what more difficult; unless to take them from it? they are ready to fly in one's face, but to be called by their own name. When, peradventure not one in a hundred that here escapes the common contagion: yet according to them, scarce one of a hundred would be found tainted, and in the guilt: though they be all for sparing and saving; and it is even as death to them, to part with any thing: and though they be still reaching and tearing for more; as if they had nothing already: and worldly hopes, and worldly heaps, lie next their hearts, and eat up the very life of religion; and destroy all the interest of Christ in their souls: yea, for the gaining of the world, they make abundantly more ado, than ever they did for the saving of their souls: and all the indoctrinating of children, and servants, and whom ever they can influence, about them, is to be wary and frugal, and take heed of waste and havock, and losing even the worth of a pin: but to make the most that ever they can of every thing: and commend and encourage them still, to be near and pinching;

ing; till they tempt the poor enslaved wretches to believe, that there is no religion, but only in gathering up fragments, and making conscience of spilling a drop of any the preparations, which are even as their hearts blood. Thus the world's good has them, when they are thought to have it, and the misers and churls are really no masters of it; but mere vassals and drudges to it. And yet do they part with God and run into all contempt of him, and rebellion against him, for the sake of it: till they have it, as the Israelites had their quails, with his wrath; and all the blessings turn to curses: when instead of honouring the Lord with them, he is rejected and set at naught, for them. Thus do they provoke the Lord to jealousy; and engage God himself for their enemy. And then, whoever make light of such impiety, good Lord deliver me from the damnable iniquity.

O my soul, am not I a Christian? and what is the great note of distinction between a Christian, and a worldling; but that the one sets his heart upon God, and the things above; and the other sets his heart upon the world, and things below? nay his mammon is the worldling's god, which he admires and serves: and so lives without God in the world; to excuse then for the sordid creature, and say, He is a good man; but only hard: It is as much as to say, He is a good man, but no Christian. For worldliness and Christianity are fire and water: there is no reconciling them together: But Christianity wherever it prevails, takes us off the world; and crucifies us to it, and it to us: and where it does not so; we have only a name, and not the thing.

But though sins more gross and sensual are easier discovered; and such sinners may be sooner convinced and reclaimed; yet this secret venom, that lurks and works in the soul, and will not be brought to confession and amendment, quite turns
away

away the heart from God; and is indeed more inexcuseable than other sins, that are rooted in the temper of the body; because it arises from an ill habit of the mind, an ungodly disposition of the soul; to set up somewhat else instead of God; worthless dross, above the chiefest good; and when other sins decay, this is still growing, as an incurable dropſy; for which even old age brings no remedy, but the evil diſeaſe cleaves faſter to them, that have the leaſt hold of the world, and are juſt ready to be out of all. Therefore has our Saviour pronounced it impoſſible for ſuch "to enter into "the kingdom of God." Matt. xix. 26. That is, ſuch as will be rich, and truſt to that, and make them a god of it. It is a changing their God, for an idol, that cannot ſave them; nor, in the day of wrath, any thing profit them.

Let men then put falſe gloſſes upon real wickedneſs; let ſuch as have a kindneſs for it, ſhew their good-will, to paint over (in a fine appearance) whoring, and worſhipping of idols, and robbing God of the love and truſt, which is his right and due; the thing that is ſo ſtark naught, they may thus betray their favour to it; but never can they alter the nature of it. And however others go to flouriſh it off; O my ſoul, ſee the hainous guilt, and dread the fearful danger. For when our Lord gives a double caution, ſure it is not without reaſon, Luke xii. 19. "Take heed, and beware of co-
"vetuſneſs." Look to it, and keep yourſelves from it; obſerve its encroachments, and check them, as the bane of all ſerious religion, and deſtructive of everlaſting ſalvation. Take heed and beware, for they may be moſt under the power and peril of this ſin, that never felt nor bewailed it; but are rather of opinion, that they have ſtill been free from it; and no more ſparing, nor ſcraping, nor purſuing the world, than what they had
very

very good reason for, and were even obliged to; and think they should have been to blame, had they less minded and plied it than they did. So does that, which our Lord calls the deceitfulness of riches, blind the covetous; that they are licking themselves whole, when the sin has even eaten them up: they will not see, what they are so loth to leave, but take the pains to defend themselves in it, which they should lay out, to break themselves off it; when they find it too sweet and gainful, so to part with it. Though the symptoms are evident and notorious upon them, in their pinching and narrow living, and their chafing at any damages and losses, in their trouble of selling goods cheaper than ordinary, and their joy and transport at dear markets, and increase of wealth, and their averfeness to part with any thing that they can make shift to keep, not at all believing the words of our Lord Jesus, Acts xx. 35. "that it is more blessed to give than to receive." But as they grow richer, so harder; and for all that they have, neither themselves or others use to be much the better as long as they live. Yet still they will find some argument, some distinction or other, to salve the matter, to make you think there is duty, yea, necessity, to be so worldly: that carking and keenness for the world, are the briers and thorns that choke the Word; nor will they hearken to any preacher or Saviour, that is against their lucre: they think they must needs be happy, when they have the world at will; though their thus getting things worldly, so often runs them out of all true felicity, and makes them miserable eternally.

O my soul, let me be warned by the miscarriage and ruin of so many, that are swallowed up and lost in this open gulph. Let me not be carried away by the course of this world; but endeavour to shew the world a more excellent way, than the common

common way of the world. Remembering how I stand engaged, whither I am going, how soon I shall for ever have done with this world, and how insignificant to my satisfaction it is, even while I have it at the fullest: O may I be as vehement and passionate for grace and glory, as worldlings are for their pelf, and things transitory; may I seek and aspire after the glorious heaven, as much as they long and pant after this wretched earth. And when I take not root here, but so desire a better heavenly country, God will not be "ashamed to be called " my God," Heb. xi. 16. But will own me for one of the right breed, born of him, and tending to him. May I sit loose to this world, ready still for a removal from it, and so ascend, and converse above; that I may look down with contempt and disdain, even upon the most famed things here below, and not hang upon this miserable world for my bliss; when I have meat to eat, which the world knows not of; too good for the world to furnish me with, and too high for the world to deprive me of; even that soul-satisfying and heart-refreshing meat, which endures to everlasting life; upon which I shall live, with my Lord and my God, world without end.

THE PRAYER.

" **O** LORD! what power and command, has
 " this vain transitory world had over me, to
 " eclipse my prospect of the eternal heavenly things
 " before me; and to damp my love of God, infinitely good, and blessed for ever. I have minded
 " and loved it too much, to the neglect of thee my
 " God, and the infinitely better things of thy kingdom. Lord, forgive my vile affections, and mortify my worldly inclinations, that I may not let
 " my

“ my heart upon this world, but dread to have my
“ portion in it. O raise up my grovelling soul, to
“ converse in heaven, to seek those things above,
“ and to live, by faith, upon those unseen glories,
“ that are everlasting. O buy me, and pluck me,
“ Lord, away from hence ; that here I may not be
“ entangled and lost ; but let me find him that is
“ in me, greater than he that is in the world ; to
“ engage my heart another, and more excellent
“ way, and to secure my affections to the fruitions
“ incomparably better ; that will endure the same,
“ without ever growing worse, world without end.
“ Amen.”

MEDITATION LXVI.

Of self-examination.

O My Soul, how curious and inquisitive are men after things abroad ? and the while, what unconcerned persons and strangers are the most at home ? letting things within them lie neglected ; as if they were nothing to them ; and in care to know every thing in the world, rather than to know themselves and in what case are their souls, and how they stand for another world. That which should be the grand inquest, as the most material point, wherein they ought to be best informed ; **O** how is it thrown off as impertinent, or taken upon trust, or left to hazard, and all adventures ! and their own souls are the part about them, that they can give no account of. How confident do they seem to be, that all is well, though never so much amiss ;

amiss; because they do not know, and will not inquire or consider, how it is with them? how do they mistake any counterfeit stuff for the truth of grace? and will not be beaten out of their vain hopes; nor thought to make any doubt, but that their hearts are good, and their interest in Christ sure enough: and go dreaming of nothing but heaven, in the very way to hell; because they will not take their hearts in task, to commune with them, and come to the good understanding of them. When yet here to be deceived, is to be undone; and to find out what is bad, the next way to get it amended; and to make but a discovery of sincerity, will pay well for all the trouble of the inquiry.

O my soul, how many are kept from Christ, by the presumption, that they have him already? and by a sort of faith, held fast still in unbelief? when they judge of themselves, only by their fancies, or their wishes; thus who in better case than they? but alas, what do false mediums produce, but only fallacies in the conclusion? flesh and blood may speak to them nothing but good; when God's Word tells them no such matter. Paul, when he was unconverted, had a better opinion of himself, than after. And who readier to absolve themselves, than the Pharisees, those outside men, that little or nothing minded what was within? they bore it out, that they were Abraham's children; though our Saviour told them, they were the children of the devil. And so can many brag of their honest, good hearts, when the Lord knows those hearts to be deceitful and desperately wicked. And as long as they go all by wrong measures, Lord, when are they like to be undeceived? The good hopers, that never come to a stand, nor once suspect themselves; nor will be brought to the touchstone of Holy Scripture, roundly conclude all in their own favour; though not a word of peace belongs to them, and
all

all the Word of God is against them. When they never so much as find, how they are out, O what real hopes, that they will be set right? and when will they come to the true knowledge of themselves, that judge only by the course of the world, and the way of the most? and flatter themselves, that they are even as they should be; because they know many as bad, and some, they believe, worse than themselves. Which, though it be true, may not be a jot the better for them; but the very thing which bears them up (if well considered) might serve to cast them down; even that they are but with the many, in that broad way, which leads to endless misery. And it is not what others are; but what my Lord tells me, I must be; if saved I will be. Let me be covered with never so fair leaves, if I bear not fruit, I am under the curse. And though I do some things that are good; yet, if my motives and designs are naught, instead of the faithful servant's reward, I may then dread the rotten hypocrite's portion. It is not for me, here to fool myself with common mistakes; nor, to sit down in a sorry dangerous condition, as if I could mock God, as well as put upon the world; but search and try my ways; yea, my very heart and spirit, my thoughts and reins; to find what workings of grace I have experienced: and what better things that accompany salvation, I have received; how I stand affected, and whether indeed I am turned and renewed? whether I am not only washed from the old mire; but have the swinish nature changed, and have obtained an inheritance among them that are sanctified? whether the way that I am upon, will serve the turn, and is the way, that is like to bring me to a blessed end?

Now is the time, my soul, to inquire into these things; and to get good information and resolution, before it be too late. To take dross for gold,

and a vain fiction of my own head, for the saving grace of God, would be a cheat, not only to my sorrow, but my ruin. What should I regard then, to hear some applaud themselves, how free are they from fears and doubts; which, alas, does but betray their deadness in sin, and their want of sense and the strong one keeping things quiet, lest he should awaken and lose them? do not I hear of such as went confidently to meet the bridegroom, when they had not a drop of oil for their lamps? and they that can hope lustily, because of their worldly prosperity; or think to presume themselves into heaven, when they lead licentious lives, and neglect prayers, and walk not in holy ways; never shall I envy their confidence, nor give a straw for all their good thoughts of themselves. O my soul, let me rather suspect the worst, and work out my salvation with fear and trembling. And if there be any way to get upon sure terms, O let me take it; yea, be the truth that concerns me never so bitter, O let me know it: for here I dread to be deceived, and therefore to the Word of Truth (the infallible test of what is sincere, and soul-saving) let me go and try myself, and by that holy rule, make proof of my heart and life; and by what I there find, abide; seem it with me, or against me; judging myself by that Word now, whereby I shall be judged in the last day. And O may he, who knows me better than I do myself, help me in this disquisition; and discover me to myself, and make me understand whereabouts I am; and how towards him I stand; and not only shew me my case, but so amend it, that I may be such as the Lord does approve, and will be pleased to accept.

THE PRAYER.

“ I Must acknowledge myself, O LORD, to have
 “ been one of those impertinents that use to
 “ ramble abroad, and concern themselves about
 “ every thing rather than what belongs to their
 “ own souls. The knowledge of my soul’s nature,
 “ yea, and even of my bodily frame, is too excel-
 “ lent for me, to attain to it. But my sinful ne-
 “ glect it is, if I am not well acquainted with the
 “ state of my spiritual affairs, to know how I stand
 “ with thee, my God, and whether I get or lose,
 “ in my way to heaven. O teach me, Lord, so
 “ well to understand myself, as narrowly to observe
 “ the usurpations of sin, and curiously to discern,
 “ the advances of thy kingdom, and the encroach-
 “ ment of the contrary party, in my soul. Let me
 “ stand on my watch, and set me upon the
 “ tower, of a serious consideration, to look down
 “ into myself, and perceive how it is with me,
 “ and whereabout I am, in the progress of my sal-
 “ vation, that where I am out I may retrieve my-
 “ self, and when I am right may hold me, till I
 “ reach the blessed end. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXVII.

Of self-denial,

TO give battle to the inclinations of our nature,
 and wrestle against flesh and blood; to con-
 flict with our own dear genius, and deny ourselves;
 this is so sharp a service, that who almost can abide

to

to hear of it? the very sound is harsh, and carries such a prejudice to the carnal mind, as makes it rejected, even before it is well considered; but, my soul, let me venture to come up to the *mormo*, and see what is in it, before I run away affrighted from it: for that which looks so grim may have a better inside, as rich mines lie under unpromising soils, and the sweet kernel is fetched out of a hard shell. Let me not then give defiance to the thing, for the name; nor condemn it, before I understand it: for to deny myself, is not so to macerate and torment myself, as to disclaim all the comforts of the world, and refuse to taste any pleasure of my life. When if I will not eat and drink, because I am unworthy, I shall so incur the guilt of murder, because I will not use the needful preservatives of life; and yet if I do use them, God has so framed the objects and organs, I cannot chuse but find pleasure in the use, And such pleasure then he does not lay as a snare, but provides, like himself, who has pleasure in the prosperity of his servants; nor does sin lie in the use, but the excess. It is not then my natural self, and the appetites which God has created, that are to be denied; no, but my carnal self, that is grown a party disjunct and opposite to him that made me, his rival and competitor, that sets up a will and law against his; and makes me only for pleasing myself, whether he be pleased or not. When my lusts and vicious habits become even incorporate with me, as parts of myself; and to part with them, seems such a violence to nature, as the dismembering of myself; such a self, it is time to deny, if I would not fight with God, and thwart his Word, and lose his love, and all my own blifs. Such a self I must renounce and hate, that would pull me from God, or engage me against him; such a self that must be humoured, though he be dishonoured; and would have me do this or that, when his Word calls me quite another way,

way, and charges me to do just the contrary. Never must I offer so to set up for myself, out of God; nor look upon myself as my own, but his; nor allow of any inclinations, that interfere and clash with his appointments; but still throw all my own interests under his, and not to do this or the other, only because I have a mind to it; but because I think that God is pleased with it; saying from my very heart, Lord, not my will, but thine be done; and down with self-will and self-conceit, that God may be all in all.

Nor must I only renounce what is downright ungodly, but deny myself in such things as minister to my idleness and luxury, to my worldliness and avarice, to my pride and vain-glory, to my wrath and vengeance; as gulosity and loose company, affectation of fashions and pompous accommodations, a gamester life, wanton dalliance and vain conversation. I must not only be humble in all my abundance, but open handed in letting it go to do good; not scraping and hoarding up, to value myself the more, upon having so much; but looking upon it, only as a price put into my hands, to do the better service to God and religion, by being the richer in good works. I must not be fond of the world's dignities or of my own accomplishments, or others commendations, or whatever would puff me up, and make me proud; but even remember that I am a poor frail worm, and sinful dust and ashes. I must not be inflamed with the impertinence of fools, the contradiction of sinners, the abuses of neighbours, the malice of enemies, or the falshood of friends; but curb the boisterous passions, possess my soul in patience, and not shew fierce and outrageous in my own cause and quarrel, as if I could not be deceived, or were too good to be wronged. I must not be wedded to my own will and way, so as to think of carrying all before me, and to affect men only
according

according as they please me, and scarce ever forgive such as affront me; but endure to be crossed of men, as well as afflicted of the Lord; and bear it with meekness from men, and humble myself under the hand of God; not repining at it, when so he would have it, but thinking that to be best for me, which he lays upon me: yea, I must use to cross myself, and act against my laziness, and give against my penuriousness, and abstain against my voluptuousness, and abase myself against my pride, and contain myself against my wrath. And all this, my soul, is not to be indeed against but for myself. It is to promote my best interest and my greatest advantage, here to make me good, and hereafter to keep me from the worst of all evils. When they that are all for indulging to their flesh, do but go all to naught, and practise the greatest cruelty in nursing it up for everlasting misery. And so when they seem most of all for themselves, they only make rods for themselves, feed the enemies to cut their throats, and to avoid a little trouble of mortifying their lusts, spill the blood, and for ever ruin the bliss of their souls.

Deny myself then, my soul, I must, or do worse: for in sparing myself, I shall but spoil myself; but if I would follow my Saviour into his glory, this of self-denial he has told me, is the way, Matt. xvi. 24. "If I deny not myself, I deny him; and he will deny me." And what is it but mockery, to call myself his, when another leader has me more than he has; and another interest sways me more than his does? I must therefore break my own will, and set myself against that enemy within me, which gives all the rest advantage against me; and dread it as the heaviest plague on this side hell, to be abandoned over to myself, to follow the swing of my own lusts, and to make my willing rule, to do only what is good in my own eyes. But to deny myself,
what

what is it, but to transfer the right to the true owner, and put myself, from a sorry keeper, into the best hands? and however sense may reluctate against it, my reason is clearly for it; that he who made me, and redeemed me, should have the disposing of me. And I cannot really do myself a greater kindness, than in being so seemingly unkind to myself. It is the means of grace, and the way to my peace, and honour, and bliss. It will make me good, and easy, and serene, in my mind; and best satisfied with myself, and most chearful and comfortable in my life; to rescue myself from the care of a fool, and the mercy of an enemy, and put myself into the hands of a God, that is my chief good, to take me to his favour, and revive me with the light of his countenance, and guide me with his counsel, till he receive me into his glory.

THE PRAYER.

“**C**ONVINCE me, O LORD my God, that the
 “ self-denial, which has looked so frightful
 “ unto me, is nothing unfriendly to me; but what
 “ I have mistaken to be against me, is indeed the
 “ best for me. O teach me so well to understand
 “ it, that I may come to like well of it, and love to
 “ use myself to it, and may experience the happy
 “ advantages which come by it: yea, give me,
 “ Lord, supernatural aids, to enable me for the do-
 “ ing of that, which by own strength I cannot ef-
 “ fect. That I may not only think of it, but suc-
 “ cessfully accomplish the thing pleasing to God,
 “ and satisfactory to my own mind, in setting my-
 “ self against my particular temptations, and for-
 “ bearing the evil to which I am urged; that so do-
 “ ing, I may get the worthiest victories over my-
 “ self, and get above the biggest dangers, that
 “ threaten

“ threaten my soul ; and may be safe in thy hands,
 “ and accepted in thy fight. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXVIII.

Of the Confession of Sin.

O MY soul, how are sinful men for keeping the devil's counsel ; and covering their transgressions, as Adam ; either with lies, to deny it ; or with impudence, to brazen it off ; or with excuses and extenuations, to gloss it over ; or with some shifts and evasions, to transfer the blame away from themselves to others ! but, alas, none of these covers will serve the turn, to save the matter, and conceal their guilt, or bring them off in the judgment. For all will come to light ; and be sure, their sin will find them out ; and be found more hateful upon them, because they were so disingenuous and sturdy in it. And they shall have the sadder after-reckoning, because they were for keeping all close to the last : and so treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, to bear the heavy brunt of all together. But the confessing of sin, is as a vomit to relieve the burdened soul, and to bring down mercy and pardon from the Lord. So the offender found it, Psalm xxxii. 5. “ I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” And so, to all it is promised ; 1 John i. 5. “ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them.” My confession then, is not to acquaint him with what he does not know of my case ; but to abase myself, and break my heart, and so to prepare me for his compassion, to my remission, and salvation.

I am

I am to make my confession, to such as I have wronged, who are capable of forgiving the injury done to themselves: and I am also at liberty, to confess other sins to the priest, or to any else, as far as I think them concerned, or likely to minister any ease and help. But I see no more obligation for others to confess to the priest; than for the priest to confess to them. And I wonder how the Romanists (if they had not the knack to extract *quidlibet ex quolibet*,) could fetch their auricular confession, and such shrivings themselves to the priest, wherewith they entangle the consciences of their people, from Jam. v. 16. where it is made reciprocal: and the thing recommended, is confessing our sins, mutually to one another; which if practised as it ought, might indeed be of very great service, to keep us humble, to establish the weak in grace, that are below us, and to invite in the aids of the strong, that are above us.

But to the offended majesty, who is also the fountain of mercy, I am to tell all, and to make my confessions, without limitations. And when himself shews me this way, and is pleased to open this door, O shall not I, a wretched sinner, readily and thankfully accept the blessed favour; and thus go upon my submission to my Father; that so soon can remedy where others, that hear my sorrowful tale, can no more than pity? to him will I freely pour out my complaint, and shew him all my trouble. I will go and tell him, where it pinches, and what is the plague of my heart; and not spare myself, that he may spare me. I will humbly arraign myself at his holy tribunal; and acknowledge my desert of his condemning sentence. With shame of face, and sorrow of heart, I will so abase myself, and bewail my sins; and pursue them with hatred, into his presence, to have execution done upon them, as the enemies of his honour, and of my soul. Yet will I

plead guilty, in hope of mercy; because I do not confess to an inexorable judge, but to an indulgent father.

And thus, my soul, let me shew the truth of my repentance, in not resetting the adversaries of the Lord; nor refusing to make sad confessions of my foul transgressions, when, alas, I can offer no other reparation, but in such self-accusation. Thus let me confound the accuser of the brethren, in being aforehand with him, and leaving him nothing to alledge against me, but what I have first preached of myself. Thus let me give glory to God, in taking all the shame to myself; and entitle myself to his promised mercy, in acknowledging my iniquity, Jer. iii. 12, 13. Yea thus will I pour out my heavy heart, and ease my oppressed mind, when my spirit is overwhelmed within me; and throw up the hook of guilt, which I have swallowed, with the tempter's bait; and grub up the very root of bitterness, upon which grows all my discomfort. O sweet confession! how sottish are the sinners, that look upon thee with an evil eye; and stand off from thee, as a grievous remedy? when thou art, indeed, the way of peace and heart's-ease, and heavenly refreshment. Thou shalt not stick on my stomach, as a tedious task, and heavy imposition; I will not hide and stifle my sins, to keep them festering and rankling in my soul, but will gladly catch hold of the gracious privilege; thus to remove the ground of my trouble; and think of no other way to purge myself, but in telling all the worst, that I know by myself, and cast it out from me; that it may not lie upon me. Thus shall I obtain mercy, even the mercy that blot's out all iniquity. And where my sin has abounded, I shall find grace much more to abound? even the free grace of God, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE

THE PRAYER.

"I Cannot but acknowledge to thee, O God, how
 "ill I have carried, and how bad it is with me.
 "And such confessions of my sins, thou mightest
 "take for evidences against my soul, to condemn
 "me, even out of my own mouth. But praised be
 "thy mercy, that I may confess in hope, and not in
 "despair. And O that I may do it with so deep a
 "sense of my sins and sorrow for them, and displea-
 "sure at them, and indignation against them; that I
 "may not go over the mention of them, as a tale
 "that is told; but may be in bitterness, and broken,
 "and contrite, as I ought to be. And the sins,
 "which I charge upon myself, O gracious Father,
 "lay them not to my charge; but see them punish-
 "ed, and atoned for, in the precious death, and the
 "infinite satisfaction of my blessed Saviour, Jesus
 "Christ. Amen."

MEDITATION LXIX.

Of Fasting.

O My soul, for thy sake it is that I fast. To ligh-
 ten thy clog, and give thee more respite, and
 better advantage, to get up and soar above. It is
 only an instrumental duty, not to be used only for
 itself; but to serve other ends, even when the neces-
 sity of my case calls for it; or the business of my re-
 ligion and salvation is to be promoted by it. Then
 am

am I to sequester myself from bodily delights, and worldly occasions, for the more solemn attendance upon my God, and giving of my mind to things spiritual and heavenly; teaching my body to be subject; knowing how to want, as well as how to abound; and depriving myself of those comforts voluntarily, whereof (for my soul abusing them) I deserve to be deprived utterly. Nor taking from the belly, to put into the purse: but bestowing upon others, what I spare from myself, and as I afflict my own flesh, so refreshing that of my poor brethren. It is not to fast for ostentation, that I may be thought more excellent than others: that were to be proud of taking physic; and to exalt myself, upon the very thing which should humble me. It is not to think of satisfying for all my breaches of God's laws, by now and then breaking my meals. It is not to turn luxury into morosity, and devour my neighbours instead of my meat. It is not to turn my tongue from dabbling in dishes and festivity; to roll in vain chat, and wanton drollery. Nor is it to exchange one sort of delicacies, for another: to be superstitious in abstaining from this kind; and take as much as I list of that, which may be called the interlude, rather than the exercise of fasting. O my soul, I must not only distinguish myself, from the licentious in eating, but in living. For to what purpose do I forbear eating and drinking; when I am drunk with passion, or full of ungodly lusts? so the devils eat nothing, yet never cease to do evil. But the fast that turns to any good account, must break my stubborn will, and starve filthy desires, and reform ill manners, and advance me in the way to heavenly pleasures; if I would find the blessed exchange of my common meat, for that which the world knows not of, enduring to everlasting life. It must abase me, in the sense of my sinful vileness; not only to make me hang down my head like a bulrush, but to bow
down

down my very heart within me. It must not give me a studied face ; but a contrite spirit, and a sorrowful soul ; mourning, and taking a kind of vengeance upon myself, for all that I have done against the Lord. It must awe me with his holy fear ; under the apprehension of his deserved judgments. And thus tying up of myself, must loose the bands of wickedness ; and pluck up my sins by the roots. For what does it signify, to refuse my daily bread ; when I drink in iniquity like water, and commit uncleanness with greediness ? how absurd, to mourn for doing that, which still I go on to do ? as if I grieved not that I had been guilty of it ; but only that I am called to break off from it ; scrupulous, what goes into my mouth ; but careless what comes out : not a bit of flesh, yet do all the works of the flesh ! pretend to fall out with myself, but fall foul upon others ! not stretch out my hand, to take a morsel ; but lift it up, to smite with the fist of wickedness ! nay, to be more boldly wicked, because I have fasted ; and turn to my vomit the more eager, because I have taken so much pains to cast it out ! O my soul, this is not only to play with the means of grace ; but most desperately to profane them. It is not then, how much I do this way, but what good it does ; if by losing my meals, I get ground of my sins ; and by what my belly has wanted, my religion has gained ; if my faring the worse, makes me live the better, and what I make my body suffer, helps my soul to prosper.

Yet must none of the abuses scare me from the use. For they that have the greatest need of it, commonly do the least of all at it, and pretend care of their health ; when it is indeed only the love of their ease, that keeps them from it. But O what members are they of the church militant, who scarce know what it is to want a meal, or to watch an hour, upon the religious account ? what christian warriors,

warriors, that will never endure any hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ? O how do we forget our sins and ourselves, when we think to have all guady days, and no bitter with the sweet? when as ploughing and harrowing, are in order to a comfortable harvest; and the sowing in tears, does but make way for the reaping in joy. Let me then gird myself to the work; and take care to make somewhat of it, that my labour may not be lost; when my strictness one way, breaks out into licentiousness another. Let me keep my body in fit case, to serve my soul, in the service of my God; namely, neither below nor above its business. Let me macerate and lessen myself, enough to get out of the tempter's snare. And when lust glows and rages, instead of throwing oil in the flames, let me withdraw the fuel that feeds them; and not think much of losing a meal to save my soul. But let me observe a diet of temperance even all my life, and add a total abstinence, even every proper exigence, not shrinking at a little trouble by the way; to prevent the bitterness in the latter end. Remembering, that they who fast and mourn now in the bridegroom's absence, shall rejoice with him eternally at his return, and then feast, and fast no more; when the days of their mourning shall be ended, and they shall be filled with the best of all pleasures in his presence for evermore.

THE PRAYER.

“ I Must acknowledge, O Lord, to the humbling of
 “ my soul, for provoking thee, and to the glory
 “ of thy compassion, in sparing me, the great guilt
 “ that I have contracted, in making provision for the
 “ flesh, to fulfil its lusts, spending my time and care,
 “ and pains and cost, to feed the fleshly lusts, that
 “ war against my soul, as if all my felicity lay in
 pleasing

“ the body, and I had no hope, but in this life. Be
 “ merciful to me, O good God, I beseech thee, and
 “ forgive and heal me; and turn again my captivity,
 “ and set me free from the thralldom of my lusts;
 “ and help me to mortify my members, which are
 “ upon the earth; and so to keep under my body,
 “ that my soul may be at better liberty, to pro-
 “ ceed in thy holy ways, to thy heavenly glory.
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION LXX.

Of resisting the devil.

THAT malignant fiend which heads the infernal
 regiments of apostate spirits, who have ut-
 terly lost themselves to every thing that is good,
 and holy, and happy; and so are fired with an ever-
 lasting enmity against all the children of God; and
 are for plucking as many as ever they are able into
 their curse and condemnation; he is the most for-
 midable foe, that has not only slain his thousands
 and ten thousands already; but still goes on to
 undo so great a part of the world, as a roaring lion,
 hungry after prey, and mighty to devour; and as
 the red (or bloody) dragon, yea, the prince and god
 of this world, lording it over the children of diso-
 bedience; and nearer to us than we are apt to ima-
 gine, has his hell even over our heads, and about
 our ears. And it is not an empty name, called *le-*
gion; that we are to encounter; but mighty armies
 lying in our way to heaven, that would hinder us
 from ever gaining that there, which themselves
 have

have for ever lost. This adversary that is all against us, still walks about (though never out of hell, because he carries his hell about him, and within him;) never finding rest, yet always seeking it, in hunting after the blood of souls: which too much do perceive the force of those hellish powers, that now escape their sight; though living in their quarters, and there doing nothing but evil; nor ever ceasing to do it; but all the pleasure they have, is that right devilish pleasure of seeking whom to devour.

O my soul, how wilt thou stand before them? and what wilt thou do to secure thyself from them? there is an expedient proposed, Jam. iv. 7. which though it does not seem to promise any great success, where the combat is so very unequal; nor to make it likely that I should prevail, by resisting the devil; yet where the promise of God gives me assurance of victory, that I so resisting, the devil will fly from me; it is not only worth while, but a thing most needful (for my duty and safety) that I should make the experiment. And now, what is this resistance, my soul? It is not only to shew disturbance at the name of the devil, and in words to set him at defiance; which some may be forward to do, that are too great with him otherwise; but it is the refusing of my consent, and not yielding to the motions and suggestions of the wicked one. For temptation is a moving us to sin with some colour of reason for it, to make it look eligible, and fit to be embraced, for some good that is like to come by it. And when thus solicited and urged, the suspending our consent, and holding back our wills from giving admittance to the motion, that is our resistance. And here, if we but stand our ground, we get the day. If we maintain our own, and reject the devil's proffers, and will not be parties to our own ruin, he cannot undo us. So has the almighty, gracious Lord restrained and chained him up, that he cannot,

not, without us, gain his mischievous points upon us. No, he must bring our wills first to join issue with his, and that by force he cannot do. For it were no will, if it could be so constrained. Nor were it sin, should we (whether we will or not) be necessitated to it. For it is the will that makes the sin. And the devil himself cannot break open the doors upon me, without mine own leave. But here is the comfort, my soul, that I do not so lie at his mercy; if I will not expose myself to it. "Satan has desired to have you, saith our Lord," Luke xxii. 31. He would fain be at it, but cannot without permission from above. No, nor without my leave. If I do not "give place to the devil," Eph. iv. 27. He must stand without till I let him in. To resist the devil then, I must resist myself, for he tempts me by myself, and sets me to do my own work. But when I turn away and scorn his baits, and tell him flatly, I must not meddle; I will not be so concerned; away from me, thou wicked one; I will keep the commands of my God; this resolution sets him packing, when he finds not the temper easy, and sequacious, to be led about as he pleases. O then here be stiff and inflexible, my soul; give him no encouragement, let him not get in a foot; but abhor the motion at the very first proposal; frown upon it, utterly declare against it, sling it away with detestation, and do not so much as stand to capitulate or parley about the matter, to make it any disputable case or moot-point; but disclaim and renounce the vile instigations, throw out the wild fire as fast as he throws it in. And in this resistance, O take the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God; quote that against him, (*scriptum est*) it is written; and this will make him quit the field: for Satan cannot stand before this breath of the Lord's nostrils. No, the holy, awful Word of God (*thus saith the Lord, see thou do it not*) is that, which

strikes all dead. Keeping upon this holy ground, thou wilt make him keep his distance. And O may not I, who am called the soldier of Christ, ever fly from the Christian colours, nor swallow the baits, even as fast as they are cast before me; but stand to my arms, and resist stedfast in the faith.

Of some I am told, Rom. xiii. 2. "Who resisting, shall receive to themselves damnation;" but here the damnation comes from non-resistance. O then animate thyself to the battle, my soul; and from hence take courage, "That greater is he who is in thee, than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. Go forth in the strength of the Lord God, and take the shield of faith, even faith in that Saviour, who has destroyed the destroyer. And he that saw him, "fall like lightening from heaven," Luke x. 18. will make him so fall before thee. O look up, by this faith, to that eternal heavenly glory, which will make the devil's offer, even of all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, very contemptible in thy eyes. And still fly, fly from the tempter, to thy Saviour, to engage his help, by thy fervent prayer; that he may be to thee a strong tower of defence, against the face of all thy infernal foes; and rebuke Satan, and repel his force, and disappoint his malice, and shortly bruise him under thy feet.

THE PRAYER.

"UNLESS I give place to the devil, he cannot break in upon me, to carry me captive at his will, against my own will. O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver me from the traitor in my own bosom, this depraved will, and the enticement of my own lusts; and give me power from on high, to withstand the assaults of the roaring lion, that goes

“ goes about, seeking whom to devour. O rebuke
 “ the deadly enemy, and break his strength, and
 “ defeat his spite, that he may never have his will
 “ upon me, but be driven back; because thou, O
 “ God, art for me. And be graciously pleased, to
 “ make me such a way of escape; that I, a feeble
 “ wretch, may be enabled to overcome, through
 “ thy grace; and to triumph in Christ Jesus, the
 “ Lord my strength and my Redeemer. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXI.

Of the necessity of regeneration.

THAT a man must be born again, that is, born of the Spirit of God, or he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; our Lord Jesus expressly affirms it, John iii. 5. But so harsh did it sound in the ears of Nicodemus, that he stumbled at it; and could not tell how to believe, or conceive it. And, O what abundance still, even of those that profess the Christian faith, are yet mere strangers to the new birth, and know not what to make of it, but reckon upon doing well enough without it? It is so abstruse, like the formation of the fœtus in the womb, and like the rise and progress of the wind, that it is wholly hid from the world, and in so great a measure hid even from those in whom it is wrought; that though they are assured of the thing, yet are they not able to account for the manner.

The patrons of nature, they flatter themselves, that they need no change, but what they have in their own hands to effect; as if they could not only transform but new-create themselves, and change their
 their

their leopard's spots and Æthiopian's skin; yea, change their very nature and whole frame, and raise up even the corpse from death to life; which is, indeed, only to be done by the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and by his quickening power, who is the great Lord and Giver of life: for believers are "not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6. The stream will not rise higher than the fountain: nature can produce no more than the terrene, animal life; and they that are defiled themselves, what better can they beget than like themselves? we are "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which lives and abides for ever," 1 Pet. i. 23. "Of his own will begat he us, with the Word of Truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures," James i. 18. There must be a principle of life, and the seed of God, before ever we can be alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. And alas, what but dead fruits, till such time as there is a living root, upon which they may grow? though the ruler of Israel knew not how these things should be, yet our blessed Saviour forbade him so to wonder at the matter, John iii. 7, 9. "Marvel not, that I said, ye must be born again;" and for that new birth, which so perplexed his thoughts, was positive in it, that there is an absolute necessity of it.

And consider it, my soul; does not our natural depravation, speak the extreme need of our spiritual regeneration! that we must have another and a better life, than what we drew with our first birth? when the first birth brings us into the world, children of wrath, O what but the second, can set us up in the church, children of God? no appearing
before

before the just and holy God, in the old rags of sinful nature; nothing pleasing to his infinite purity, can be wrought out of such polluted stuff; no patching or palliating, that here will serve the turn; but we must be new-made, yea, "created in Christ Jesus, to good works," Eph. ii. 10. And nothing will avail, but the new creature, Gal. vi. 15. No, the most fair, and civil, and honest of the unregenerate sort, what are they, but whited tombs, washed swine, fine coloured snakes, corrupt trees, strangers and enemies? nay, even the moral goodness itself, may but serve to hinder some from seeking after better things that accompany salvation, when so well they are to pass, and have such a fair reputation; what matter then, may they think, for repentance and regeneration? but can they be heirs of glory before they are children of grace? and can they be children before they are born, or grow up to eternal life, before they pass the gate of the new birth? alas, even the best natured persons must have their nature healed; and have as much need to be converted as they have to be saved, Matt. xviii. 3. "Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven: for grapes will not grow upon thorns, nor figs upon thistles." Glory is not a sudden new production, but grace grown up to full maturity and perfection. Only the new man shall dwell in the new Jerusalem. The heart of stone must be turned into a heart of flesh. And is not that the work of God, and the Lord's own doing? O who else is sufficient for it but he alone, that can raise children to Abraham even out of stones, light out of darkness, beauty out of deformity; and change wolves into lambs, yea, dead sinners into living saints?

O may this change, my soul, be ever marvellous in my eyes; and do thou fear and tremble before the Almighty Potter, when thou art but as clay in his

his hands, to be made a vessel to honour or dishonour. And whatever thou hast better than any others, own it for a plant of thy heavenly Father's planting; and walk humbly before him, and give all the glory to him. O admire and magnify his free grace and distinguishing love, and wait upon thy God continually, to perfect the work of his own hands upon thee. Yea, even in the worst case despair not of his help, who plucks brands out of the fire, and brings even publicans and harlots to the kingdom of heaven. When the great work is his work; mountains then are levelled, and difficulties removed, and all is made plain and easy before him. It is to some purpose therefore, even for the very chief of sinners to bemoan their case to him, and beg for his saving mercy from him. For though they cannot be saved till renewed, yet how soon can he make them quite other things? and still is there hope for them, if they cry mournfully and mightily to him, to shew them his mercy, and grant them his salvation. But thou, my soul, extol his grace, and praise his name, that brings such good out of evil, as since the fall of man, to set up upon surer terms, and in better hands. For where Adam could not keep that wherewith he was intrusted; I may say, as the Apostle, 2 Tim. i. 12. "I know whom I have believed; and I am persuaded, that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him, against that day." And in his good work begun upon me, he has given me a pledge of his everlasting love to me; making me confident, that now my new life spiritual shall grow up to the blessed life eternal.

THE PRAYER.

‘ **O** Righteous GOD! I am, by nature, un-
 ‘ clean; lying in my blood, and not only
 ‘ far gone, but dead in my sins. So that I need
 ‘ not only to be a little cleansed and repaired, but
 ‘ to be wholly changed, and quite renewed. O
 ‘ give me a new life, a new heart and a new spirit;
 ‘ and so make me, every way, a new creature.
 ‘ New frame and fashion me, by the powerful ope-
 ‘ ration of thy Spirit; that I may not only make
 ‘ a fair appearance to the world, but may be such
 ‘ as is approved of by the Lord. Yea, let my inner
 ‘ man be renewed, not only for once, but day by
 ‘ day, till I become perfect in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXII.

Of Choosing our Religion.

O MY soul, how graciously has the good God
 prevented me, to make his holy religion e-
 ven my birth-right, as being the professed religion
 of my nation! yet am I not only upon that score, to
 take it for true; when even the most erroneous and
 absurd, may have as much as that to say for them-
 selves. But I must enquire into the grounds of it,
 and “be ready always to give an answer, to every
 “one that asks me a reason of the hope that is in
 “me,” 1 Pet. iii. 15. It is not, (out of a religious
 vertigo) to run the round of various opinions: and
 to be of all, that I may so know where to fix. No,
 but,

but, (according to the best means, and discerning, which God has given me,) so to ventilate, as to separate the chaff from the wheat; and see that I be found in the faith: not only hitting upon it by chance, but settling in it, out of deliberate choice. For thus every one that has a soul to save is concerned, to be "fully persuaded in his own mind," Rom. xv. 5. Not taking all upon trust, but judging as well as he can for himself, because he must at last answer for himself, and so growing established in the truth, and holding fast that which is good; that seducers may not fraudulently wrest it out of his hands. Though all have not the parts and quickness, to silence every objector; yet must they have that understanding and belief, and love of the truth, as to satisfy them of its availableness to the saving of the soul. That they may not be carried away with every wind of doctrine, but have that in them, which may make them proof against all that would impose upon them.

And where the sticklers for some other religions, will not allow their votaries so much as a judgment of discretion; nor give them leave to enquire for themselves; our Lord, and our church, do put all upon searching the scriptures, and trying the doctrines, by that infallible test. And indeed so merciful has the gracious God provided, that the great things necessary to salvation, which every one ought to know and believe, should lie plain and open to all. As that which is needful to preserve the life of the body, is common, and cheap to be had; so what is needful to preserve the soul to life eternal, he would not have to be hid in the dark, nor far to seek, but obvious to every humble and honest inquirer into his holy word? which is the eternal standard of all saving truth, from whence there is no appeal. And it is not what this man, or that company of men says, but what the great Lord of all has said, that I ought

ought to abide by, and to acquiesce in. For there is (*erudita nequitia*,) wicked wit, employed to hide a cheat, and to beguile unstable souls; and how many are hard at work, to gain profelytes; who yet know not whom they have believed, nor whereabout they are themselves, having deserted and flighted the holy scriptures; they are never like to find sure footing any where else. But they that fix on this holy ground are safe, and deceivers come too late then, to make a prey of them. For "whosoever abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God, but he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, hath both the Father and the Son," 2 John 9. And they that have right learned Christ, have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21. That is, to know truly, so as he propounds it to the soul. By which means they have a satisfying conviction, that the way which they are upon is of God, and leads to him, and ends in everlasting blessedness with him. And then being settled in so good a choice, they go on in a steady course. For from the well established mind, comes the good regular life. And when stedfast and unmoveable in the faith, they are like to "abound in the work of the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. After come to a full resolution for their religion, it is lost labour then to attempt the fetching them off that way whereof they know so much, not only of the holy truth, but of the heavenly goodness, by their own experience.

This then, my soul, may help to resolve the question, what the illiterate shall do, among the variety of religions, contended for in the world, where every one seems so confident of his being in the right? must they turn over all books of controversy, to see what is said for every sect and party, no need of that, there is a more compendious course, and much surer way to be taken. As long as they have the gospel in their hands, and eyes in their heads,

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they

they may see plain enough, what the will of the Lord concerning them is, and what will do their business, to bring them safe to heaven. The word of God is the fountain of truth, the light of our eyes, and the guide of our feet; a sufficient rule, that is so infallible, we need not fear trusting it, if we do but understand it, and so plain too, that we cannot miss of understanding it, (in all points needful for us,) if the fault be not our own. For "the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple, Psal. xix. 7. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple," Psal. cxix. 130. Though it does not make them scholars, nor free them from all manner of errors, yet will it secure them from erring to their ruin; and make them wise to the saving of their souls. And then, for the many things hard to be understood; if they never understand them, yet may they do never the worse. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him:" (let them be learned, or unlearned;) "and he will shew them his covenant," Psal. xxv. 14. "And if any man (whosoever,) will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God," John vii. 17. He shall know it, by several criterions, and convincing evidences, as by its staining the pride of man, and glorifying the grace of God, in our salvation by Jesus Christ, by its tendency to suppress sin and wickedness, and to promote a holy good life: by its drawing the heart and mind away from earthly temporal things, to the heavenly and eternal; by its carrying us out of forms and carnal rites, to worship our God in spirit and in truth; and by its efficacy to settle the conscience in solid peace with God, through the confidence of his love to us, in his soul's beloved. For these are certain measures, to keep any man of common sense in the way of salvation. And thus comes the believer to have "the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10. Not to hang
all

all upon the judgment and courtesy of others; nor only to suppose, but to feel the truth, by the powerful influence that it has upon himself, to transform him into a suitableness to what he believes; which does more confirm him, than all the authority of the biggest men in the world can do. So that he will never be put out of that, which he has once been taught of God, for ever to do him good,

THE PRAYER.

“**B**LESS thy name, O Lord, that I am not yet
“to choose my religion, but upon a thorough dis-
“quisition, impartial comparison, and mature deli-
“beration, I have a clear conviction, and full satis-
“faction, as to that whereof I make profession. That
“I am not like Reuben, unstable as water, nor as
“the sceptics, that can fix no where: because I am
“not left only to my own uncertain reason, but
“have the blessed advantage of thy infallible revela-
“tion, nor do I believe, only because of the church’s
“saying, but have the witness in myself; and have
“found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the
“prophets did write, and do know, that this is in-
“deed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. And
“whether should I go from him, that has the words
“of eternal life; and has so plainly taught the word
“of God in truth; that by what is written, I may
“believe on the name of the Son of God; and
“believing may have life, through his name; and
“by doing his will, may know the doctrine to be of
“God? having found him then, O may I never let
“him go, but hold him and the profession of my
“faith fast, without wavering, and still be as true to
“his gospel, as the gospel is true in itself. So help
“me, O my God, and keep me in the truth; and
“make me faithful unto death. Amen.”

MEDI-

MEDITATION LXXIII.

Of making a good Profession before the World.

I CANNOT but wonder at some, (with whom yet I am loth to be offended ; while I take them to be religious, and sound at the bottom;) that they should be so very close and reserved, and keep their religion as such a mighty secret, which nobody must be aware of; and steal to Christ in great privacy? like Nicodemus by night, as if they were ashamed of him, in a generation that does not care for him: or as if they were engaged in a scandalous cause; and carrying on some works of darkness, to make their way so clandestinely to heaven, that none shall suspect whether they are going. My soul, what needs all this sculking and latency, that faithful servants should be so shy to own a Lord, of whom they have such cause to be proud, and afraid to be seen in the way, that is so much to their honour: away with this ill-placed modesty, nay, this proud bashfulness; that we cannot do our duty for shame; and are not hardy enough to be trusty to our Lord, for fear of the flouts and scorn of men. In God's name, let us dare to appear for him, whose we are, and never fear deeply and thoroughly to engage in his cause; who is so well able to bear us out.

But I think my offence and indignation is very just, at another sort, who not only refuse to be professors themselves, but condemn and exclaim of it in others: and scarce ever shew so much zeal, as they do, against those that are more forward and zealous for the holy cause than themselves, as if they did
not

not know a greater fault in the world, than for a man to shew himself on the Lord's side: and what a value and love he has for the word and ways of God, and how he is clearly for the faith, and service, and following of his Saviour. O this profession sticks on their stomachs; and all professors at a venture, are (with them) a company of hypocrites. So heartily do they hate all piety, that they cannot abide any thing which but looks like it. And then to colour the malice, the rallying must be at hypocrisy: They hate this hypocrisy, they are not for making a flandering shew: they are even as you see them, (and that is bad enough;) they have the good hearts, tho' they keep not such ado. But what blind striking is here; when the beam is in their own eye? for do not themselves all this while, profess to be Christians, and how can any man in the world profess higher than so? for it is to profess the most pure and heavenly religion, that ever was or can be. But if they be no Christians indeed, as well as in name, how then will they put from their own door the dishonesty and hypocrisy so much declaimed against? and can any known swearers, drunkards, fornicators, muck-worms, scoffers at holiness, be right Christians? nay, is this their Christianity, so to confront its blessed Author, as to call it their humility? to put their light under a bushel; when he commands them to let it shine before men? that is, to make their boast, "that they will not do, what their Lord charges them to do," Matth. v. 16. Though too true it is, that one may be a bad man, under a good profession: yet no less true is it, that one cannot be good without it. Both because our Lord commands it, and also because his grace seated in the heart, will not endure there to be pent up; but will from that fountain stream out, to be heard of in the mouth, and to be seen in the life.

I must confess, that sometimes I have been checked

ed in this opinion, by our Saviour's caution, Matth. vi. 1. "Take heed that you do not your alms before men." But the next clause there, [*to be seen of them,*] removes that scruple. For he that would have our works conspicuous as the light, to cast a convincing splendor abroad in the world, cannot oblige us to such contradictions, as also to stifle our good, so that it may evermore escape the notice of our neighbours. Therefore must his meaning be, that we make not mens observation and ostentation, our aim and intention, but have a better meaning, in our well doing; not that they may praise us, but praise our Lord, and be excited to the glorifying of him, by what they see exemplary in us. And that proverbial expression, ver 3. "Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doth;" is but a farther check to the vanity, and pride of boasting and trumpeting our own good deeds; teaching us, that so far we should be from angling for others applause of them, that as far as may be, we should ourselves overlook and forget them. And that honour, which is the shadow of virtue, if it follow us, without our seeking; yet should we no more heed and regard it than we do our shadow, any further, than it is a gift of God's bounty, and a spur to our duty.

But for all this, never must we leave the praise-worthy thing undone; lest any should know of it, or commend us for it. For some may take as much pride in a sort of concealing, as others do in divulging the matter. And we may be willing others should be witnesses; that they may also be followers of our good. Nay, we are bound to follow after the things that are lovely, and of good report; and to provide things honest in the sight of all men. For though all be not gold that glisters, yet the right gold should look like itself; and true stars not wrap up themselves in obscurity, because some meteors make but a glaring shew. Our works should praise
us,

us, though our own tongues must not. And when we refuse "to confess our Lord before men, he calls "it a denying him," Mat. x. 33. Nay, if we shew not ourselves for him, and with him, he says we are against him, Mat. xii. 30.

O my soul, if my heart has felt, and loves the holy truth, as it is in Jesus; shall I not stand up to declare for it; that I may encourage others also to plead the same cause, and so make the greater party against the wicked enemy? when vice and ungodliness is so bold-faced, sure it is not a time for serious religion to hide all in corners: but a call unto all that fear and love our Lord, to come forth and shew themselves, and join their forces, to vindicate the malign-ed truth; and to stickle for the oppressed cause, and let the world see that we will not be determined by its fashion, nor be ashamed to go abroad in a religious garb: though never so much out of request with the most: but be awed by conscience more than custom, and still cleave fast to our Lord, though it be even against all the world.

THE PRAYER.

" **B**LESSED Jesus! thou hast promised, that who-
 " soever shall confess thee before men, thou
 " wilt confess him also before thy Father in heaven.
 " O God forbid, that ever I should be ashamed of
 " him, in whom alone I have cause to glory. I have
 " been openly received into thy church, O Lord, and
 " enrolled in the number of thy faithful soldiers and
 " servants. Such a one it is my honour, to be cal-
 " led: and such let it be my care to be found. O
 " let me dare to espouse thy cause; whoever dare to
 " oppose it: yea, the more let me appear for it: the
 " more any take upon them, to say or do against it.
 " Let me speak of thy testimonies, even before the
 " biggest, and not be ashamed, and defend thy holy
 " ways, against the bitterest, and not be afraid. O
 give

“ give me, not only the grace to be godly, but also
 “ the zeal, that shall make me exemplary. That the
 “ holy religion may look amiable in me, like itself:
 “ and so win others to serve and glorify my Lord.
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXIV.

Of having a good name.

O My Soul, how studious and laborious are men to get a name, and to eternize their memories; that they may hear well while they live, and be talked of, to their praise, when they are dead? great indeed was the man, “ who pronounced “ a good name to be better than precious ointment,” Eccles. vii. 1. For it casts a fragrant odour abroad far and wide; not only to refresh him that enjoys it, but others also that are entertained with the grateful perfume of it. But yet this good name (like the rest of worldly goods) will do us good, only according as we get it and use it; that is, if we come honestly by it, and if we make the right improvement of it. It is to be valued as the result and lustre of worthy actions, especially when we are in such posts and places, that the credit of the gospel and the advancement of religion depend much upon our unblemished reputation. And so far then we may thankfully accept the honour, as a means to promote the honour of our God; though still we must be more careful of our souls than of our credit, yet will the care of our souls keep us also from growing careless of our credit, yea, and oblige us to follow after the things which are of good report, that so we may be the more capable of doing better service to our Lord, and also more
 good

good to others souls: for, when we have lost ourselves in the world, what regard then shall we find in our attempts, though we set ourselves to promote even the best works? after we are grown scandalous ourselves, it casts a blot of infamy and contempt upon all that is said or done by us. Stigmatized persons are such sorry instruments; nay, they lie by as useless tools. And together with their names, how commonly do they make shipwreck also of their souls!

Yet must I not be so concerned for a name, my soul, as if I had done all my business, when I had got the popular applause. For there is no living by that air. No, I may have it, and be starved in the midst of it. And, O what will it avail me, to have a name that I live, when the Lord knows I am dead; to be called and reputed other than I am; to be caressed and admired of men, when I am cast out, and abhorred of the Lord! as it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment; so how small, to be hoisted up by man's plaudit? as it will do me no hurt to be censured for a cheat, when God knows my heart to be right; so what good, to be thought good, when he knows me to be naught? If I have peace within, and his approbation from above, what need I then hang at the people's courtesy, how they will be pleased to write me down in their books? alas, what empty nothings are their thoughts and words? and how wretched is the life, to feed upon rumours, and stand beholden to fame for my content; and ask the multitude, whether I shall be happy? yea, how wicked is the cheat, so to put upon the world a fallacy, and rob God of his glory, to covet the hearts of men, which are his throne; and seek the praise of all, which is only his right? O how many are called my betters, who are never a jot the better for that? and how many are trampled, as the off-scouring of all things on

earth, who are the jewels of heaven, and set apart of God for himself? let me not hang the head then, to pass sometimes through evil report, as well as good report; after so much worthy company of (indeed) my betters; who were once traduced, even as the worst of men, but will be for ever honoured as the saints and favourites of God. O what can an empty title add to me, or diminish from me? and when I am going to receive my everlasting doom, how little will it stand me in stead, what they do think of me, who must themselves be judged together with me, and we must all of us stand or fall, at the sentence of our Judge eternal! if I am saved, then shall I inherit the highest glory: and if I perish; alas, what will all the world's commendations then relieve me!

O my soul, let me not plod and struggle, for a bubble to survive me; but be in greatest care to do my duty, and the things that are praise-worthy; and then leave the Lord, whom I serve, to provide for my honour; and be at his finding, what share I shall have; and when, and how, it shall come to my hands. He is faithful, who has promised, that "the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance," Psal. cxii. 6. Therefore let my grand concern be, to approve myself one of that number; and then, be sure, I shall not want for honour.

But that I may not too early erect my plumes, let me still consider my sins, to keep me low in my own eyes. That however others please to commend me, I may not forget to condemn myself; nor suffer any honour to rest upon me, but what shall redound to the honour of my Lord, and be sent away to his exchequer; that not unto me, but unto his name, may be all the glory.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**HOUGH I must follow after the things that
 “ are of good report, and be in care to keep
 “ up a fair reputation before the world ; yet, keep
 “ thy servant, O Lord, from being proud of a
 “ name, or puffed up with the praise of men ; that
 “ I may not value myself ever the more, for any
 “ kind or great things said of me, which I myself
 “ may best know how to disprove. Or be they
 “ never so true ; yet not to any of my worth, but
 “ to thy grace alone belongs all the praise. O let
 “ thy glory still be my great aim ; and no further
 “ let me insist upon any credit of my own, than it
 “ may be serviceable to thy truth, and tend to glo-
 “ rify thy name, through Jesus Christ, Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXV.

Of sincere obedience.

IF without doing the will of my heavenly Father,
 I shall not enter into the heavenly kingdom ;
 as I would then inherit his glory, O how does it
 concern me, my soul, to fulfil his pleasure ? and be-
 cause the perfection of obedience (in my circum-
 stances) is not possible ; but the sincerity is necessary,
 and that will be acceptable ; I must therefore under-
 stand, and I must also perform that sincere obe-
 dience, as ever I hope to find acceptance. For if I
 do not know wherein it consists ; how can I be sa-
 tisfied, in discerning when I have attained to it ? and
 if I do not indeed let myself to go through with it,
 it will do me more hurt than good, to have the
 knowledge of it.

What

What is this sincere obedience then, my soul, but an impartial respect to all the commands of God; to set them before me, as the way wherein I am to go; and the rule by which I am to act: and then honestly to apply my best endeavours, to walk and do thereafter? It is not the fear of wanting uprightness, that will straight prove me to be destitute of it. For so might I conclude against some tender and humble Christians, that are more apt to suspect themselves, than many that have much greater reason for it. Nor will some failings and falls make me a hypocrite: for, according to that measure, O which of the children of God upon earth would not be found guilty? when in so many things we offend all: and even the righteous man falls often every day: which indeed speaks them frail; but will not give them up convicted for false. Yet as some may condemn themselves, whom God will acquit: so may others be cast and rejected of the Lord, that pass for good men and true, in the eye of the world. And it is not so much what I, or any men think and conceive, as what he, who searches the heart, does allow and approve. My great care then must be to approve my heart to him; and that I may do so, I must not regard iniquity in this heart, nor harbour and countenance any sin there, which I refuse to part with; nor serve Mammon, as my commander; nor so love the world, as is inconsistent with the love of God; nor carry on any designs, contrary to his honour and pleasure; nor be offended at his Holy Word, but love it in my heart; and covet and strive still after more and better conformity to all that it requires, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God; that is, to attain to such a perfection, as is in this life attainable.

For,

For, O my soul, what a glorious Spectator is ever over me, and what a piercing eye upon me! and what though I could deceive all the world, while my Judge knows me to be false in his covenant, and that I have no heart right with God? he that knows my frame and allows for my frailty; yet will take nothing in good part from me, without uprightness and sincerity. As I myself would be pleased with the smallest offices of love, coming from one, that I am persuaded has the true kindness for me; when I care not for all the pretensions and tenders of friendship, from such as I know to be false, and nothing hearty to me. And may not I expect the same measure then, from the God that requires truth in the inward parts, and hates dissimulation and cheat, more than I can? if I hold the truth in unrighteousness, and do not give my heart to the Lord; if this world be my end, and carnal self my centre, and the praise of men my great aim, and the glorifying and pleasing, and enjoying of God, none of the intention of my mind, nor the desire of my soul; I shall then be “weighed in the balance, and found wanting;” and being a hypocrite in heart, shall “heap up wrath,” Job xxvi. 13. Yea, come under the curse of the deceiver, Mal. i. 14. “That has in his flock a male, but vows and sacrifices to the Lord a corrupt thing;” when I have a heart to give, yet will give no more than a lip or a knee. O how far is this from truth! and how far will it remove me from peace? how shifting and uneasy now is the hypocrite’s life, full of fear and shame, and gripes and remorse of conscience! and hereafter, how dreadful the hypocrite’s portion, where is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth!

But not only the upright man’s end is peace; but all the way to it is sweet. When in simplicity and godly sincerity he has his conversation in the world;

he finds, by such fruits, that he is on good grounds, because in the living vine Christ Jesus; and so, one to whom there is no condemnation. And this gives him the boldness of a lion; so that he is not ashamed nor afraid, when his heart is found in the statutes of his God. Yea, this gives him the testimony of conscience, which is his rejoicing; that he walks before the Lord in truth, and with an upright heart. And though he has been often foiled and defeated; and knows many blemishes and miscarriages, that he has to bewail in his life, yet he would never, since his conversion, yield to the enemy; nor lie by it in any way of wickedness; but still repent, and get up again, and strive for conquest afresh; and was right in the general bent of his heart, and the whole tenor of his life. This is a cordial of comfort, at all times; but, O the unspeakable consolation that it will give, at the greatest need, in the hour of death, and the day of judgment, when a dram of such solid comfort, will out-weigh all the wealth of the world! when the righteous and merciful Lord, that loveth righteousness and mercy, will not be extreme to exact what is wanting, nor to mark what is done amiss by his servants; but looks to the willingness of their minds, and the good intention of their hearts, shall, with his favourable countenance, behold the upright; and with his reviving words, welcome them into the joy of their Lord.

O my soul, who would not do all heartily to such a Lord! or count any thing too much for a God so infinitely good? walk before him in thy integrity, and beware of this leaven of hypocrisy. Search as narrowly after it as the Jews did, to cast out all the crumbs of unleavened bread. Look to thy state, and commune with thy own heart; nor give thyself rest under any guile of thy spirit. O be not so much concerned to know what men think
of

of thee ; as to order thy ways, so that the Lord may accept thee. And not only affect thyself with his continual nearness to thee, and inspection of thee ; but remember his love, as well as his presence ; and look upon him as thy dear friend and Father, and husband ; that thou mayest not only do his will, but delight to do it. For thou dost not use to play the hypocrite with those whom thou so dearly lovest. Yea, seek to him, that can set thee right with him ; and importune the Disposer of hearts, to join thine to himself ; to give thee the thing that is so pleasing in his sight, even a clean heart, and a right spirit ; that he may also give thee all grace and glory, and withhold no good thing from thee, walking uprightly. For nothing will he think too good for them, who think not their hearts too good for him ; but after they have lived to him sincerely now ; he will receive them to live with him blessedly for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**HY Word has taught me, O God, that right believing is not enough, without well-doing ; and that it will not avail me to do the things that are good ; if I do them not heartily, as to the Lord. O then, let me add to my faith obedience ; and as I trust in thy mercy, so let me serve thee in sincerity, and walk before thee in the way of my duty. O ! thou Fashioner of all hearts, make mine sound in thy statutes ; that, not in guile and wicked hypocrisy, but in simplicity and godly sincerity, I may have my conversation in the world ; and so, the testimony of my conscience may be my rejoicing ; and I may have confidence towards God, and joy in thee, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXVI.

Of the poverty of Spirit, and carrying ourselves humbly.

O How many poor creatures have high spirits; and will not be humble in mind, though never so low in the world, but some there are that can keep lowly minds, even in the highest posts: and all their exaltation does not exalt them at all. How commonly do we find the basest wretches, (who have the greatest cause to abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes,) the most conceited of themselves; and the furthest of any men in the world from a penitent sense of their sins; whereas the greatest souls, and the best men, have the least opinion of their own worth, and the worst thoughts of themselves. Now this, my soul, is to be poor in spirit. It is not to be base spirited, and live sordidly: because we cannot find in our hearts to use our plenty, nor to do the poor unbecoming things; because we are lazy, or timorous, or careless of our souls, and regardless of all that is worthy of a man, and not because we are truly humble and lowly in heart. Nor is it the affected familiarity with inferiors, to get their commendation, nor the formal confessions of unworthiness, whereby we really intend not to abase ourselves; but rather to be the better thought of by others. But it is to be mean in our own eyes; and to think and judge very contemptuously of ourselves, and of all that belongs to us, which we can call our own: yea, to be contented that others also should think as ill and poorly of us.

And dost thou not know, my soul, what infinite
cause

cause I have, to keep thus low in my own esteem, and not only to be free in speaking coarsely and hardly of myself, but really to believe as I say, and let it be the very sense of my heart, not only by reason of my vile original, and my precarious being; that I came of that, which I count too infamous to be named; and that I still depend upon him that gave me my being, even as a shadow does on the substance: and am nothing but by his mere favour, who, as he formed me, can in a moment cashier me, but as I am a wicked sinner, which makes me much worse than nothing, and inferior to the very basest creature, because even in a worm or a toad, there is not that resistance of God, and contradiction to his holy laws, which lies rooted in my corrupt nature, as the cause of his aversion and indignation. To be a traitor and a rebel, O what more disgraceful, to be so full of evil, and so little to all good; to have sinned not only against the best laws, but against the greatest goodness, and the richest mercies, and all the endearments of heaven; even with all aggravations of guilt, that I can think of! O what confounding considerations are these, and what will stain my pride; and make me ashamed of myself, and to lay my mouth in the dust before the Lord, if not to call to mind my faults, and follies, my shameful miscarriages, and inexcusable sins; my heinous offences, and repeated provocations; to which also I must add that mass of corruption, which is still working in me, the sin that cleaves so close to me, and so easily befalls me, yea, exposes me a prey to almost every temptation that presses upon me. All which makes it no injustice to implead myself, in my own thoughts, as the chief of sinners: and no telling lies then of myself, to say but what I think. For whatever others may be, I am best acquainted with my own heart, and my own defects and evils, and all that is in them. I do not so well understand the case and cir-

cumstances of others, what temptations they have encountered; what means and mercies they have enjoyed, what convictions and assistances they have experienced: but if the greatest malefactor had received the grace, which has been bestowed on me; he might have carried the matter, better than I have done. And should the Lord let go his hold, and turn me loose to myself, I cannot tell where I should stop. And then must I judge myself, by what I should be of myself. For what I have received, that is none of mine. I do not know so bad by others; but my own falls and failings, my own many and mighty sins, and vile vicious inclinations, are ever before my eyes; and I am too sensible, that in me dwells no good thing. Though God has done great things for me: alas, what do I, but spoil all, and undo myself; and what do I deserve, but to be trampled and despised of God and man.

Let who will brag, with the proud pharisee, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are: I have a good heart, and who can say any hurt of me? thus still making good even the worst of their matters: O my soul, let me never use my wit and pains to sow such fig leaves over my nakedness: nor open my mouth in my own case, unless it be to criminate and arraign myself. For, alas, I have not a word to say, in my own defence; no, I have nothing but shame and confusion to take unto myself. When I have not only done some things amiss, and been a little faulty; but all things considered, I do not know a greater offender. Ah! Lord, I am nothing, and I have nothing, but sin and shame, and folly, that is my own. And it is by the grace of God, and his mere favour, that in any respect I am a jot better. Thus must I throw down myself, if I would do justice to myself; and give glory to God. And this is my duty, and the only way of my safety, and of my advancement to his heavenly glory. For, it is the word of the
 Lord

Lord, Mat. xxiii. 12. "Whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be abased, and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

Now thus to think of ourselves, no more highly than we ought to think, is a means to keep us from carrying more proudly, than we ought to carry. For the poverty of spirit is the true root of that humility, which is to be expressed in the life. Tho' it is not pride, to have a spirit and carriage suitable to our station and rank in the world, nor to disregard all men, compared with God, nor to use a judgment of discretion, in examining and chusing for ourselves, where we have souls of our own to save; nor to be sensible of that knowledge and grace, wherewith God has blessed us above any others, nor to set such a value upon our reputation, as (on some occasions) to stir in its vindication, nor to neglect the idle formalities of the world; while we are intent on much better matters. Some may be under censure for their pride, in such respects, who yet do humble themselves in the sight of God, and give no just offence before the world.

Yet, my soul, I have the greatest need to take care of manifesting humility in my words, and in all my behaviour and conduct; abstaining from the discourse, that favours of arrogance and vain glory, and tends to ostentate and magnify myself; yea, being forward rather to speak what makes for my diminution and shame, to harp upon my deficiencies and follies, my defeats and misdoings: thus shewing, that I little care how I am depressed, so that God be glorified; and also discovering an air of lowliness and humiliation, in all the deportment and tenor of my life and conversation. Not huffish and supercilious, full of scorn and disdain, as if all were below me, but carrying so meek and submissive, as if all were too good for me, and every one my better. Not all in a flame, and ready to burst out in
vengeance

vengeance and extremity, under any contempt and wrong contradiction and affront, but to contain myself, and quench the fire, and soften the hard things, and put some mild construction on the sorry matter; and throw it off with as little concern as possible. Not aggrieved at an inferior place; nor shy of mean offices, nor disdaining conversation even with the poorest; but rather loving to come behind, and hugging myself in the lowest room. Not proud of any wealth or prosperity in the world, nor valuing myself upon it any more, than if I had nothing of it: nor inaccessible and disdainful to any, but as easy to be spoke to, and dealt with, even as the poorest body. And under the frowns of the world, and any hardships of the present time, not biting at the chain that holds me; nor grumbling at the load that lies upon me, but quietly acquiescing in the will of God; and taking all in good part from his blessed hand. Not dressing myself so much by my gals, as by my Bible; nor making the cover of my shame, the discovery of my pride, not so much concerned to go gay and trim, as to be wise and good, counting the clothing of humility, the best part of all my finery. Not aiming at pompt, and equality with the great, in my accommodations and furniture, but taking up contentedly with that, which rather keeps under, than exceeds others of my degree and quality. Not setting myself above the word of God; nor offering to dispute any of his revelation; or to quarrel any of his pleasure; nor preferring my own will, nor chusing my own ways before his, but taking all upon the credit of his word, and liking well of every one of his commands; and thinking him still much fitter to teach and order me, than I myself am.

Now in all such respects, my soul, so to humble myself towards God and man, is it not the surest course that I can take, to lie low, and not exposed
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to his thunder, who resists the proud? it is not the sweetest course, to provide for my ease and peace, in avoiding a thousand things, which will never let the proud be quiet; and is it not the most recommending course; instead of losing me, to render me more considerable, than such as discover their nakedness, in scrambling up to snatch at honour; yea, to raise me higher in his favour, who has respect to the lowly, and gives grace to the humble? and yet, consider, my soul, how small a matter is this, which the Lord my God requires of me; but to acknowledge my poverty and unworthiness, my vileness and sinfulness; that is, to confess the plain truth. And tho' I cannot attain to high things, yet sure I may be sensible of my low estate. To be clothed with humility, will put me to no charges; but save abundance of needless expences. And, O my soul, what a worthless insignificant thing is the praise of men; that ever thou shouldest be greedy to live upon such air and wind, let them think and speak, either in my commendation, or my disparagement; I am but all one still as I was. And their mistakes, in my favour, will make no manner of addition to my worth and goodness: and their censures to my defamation and wrong, and lay me never the lower, nor make me ever the worse. The bladder looks big, but it has nothing in it. Compliments and flattery, are but lies to please fools. And that honour, which is called the shadow of virtue, whether it follow me, or fly me, let me remember it is still but a shadow. To walk in my integrity, and discharge my duty, that will do more good, and bring more peace and joy to me, than to have all the men in the world applaud me. And though I miss of the commendations from them; it will be infinitely better for me, to bear at last, well done, from my Lord. O let me be mindful of the talents committed to me; and the charge that lies upon me, and then be in such care
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to give a good account of my stewardship to him, that I little regard their opinion of me, who are all to receive their own doom along with me. Let me still be checking and mortifying the vain humour; and not only reason, but exercise myself out of it; and every day be calling to mind somewhat, to put me to confusion: and every day be doing somewhat in the way of that humiliation, which is the very foundation of my salvation.

And look up, my soul, to thy great preserver and defender, against all thy foes, and pray in his help against this worst of them all, myself, that he may pluck the old man out of his strong hold; even the the pride, where he fortifies himself. O importune him, that has pulled down many stout hearts, to make mine yield; and so to take me down here; that he may raise me for ever; and bring me, as a little child, to enter the kingdom of heaven.

THE PRAYER.

“**L**ORD! what is man, that thou art mindful
 “ of him! and what am I, poor sinful dust
 “ and ashes, that I should so forget myself? O what
 “ have I to be proud of? what good, that I have
 “ not received! O how much evil that I have com-
 “ mitted, for which I ought to be humbled? but I
 “ can be proud without reason, yea, and against it.
 “ For all pride is most unreasonable; and nothing
 “ more absurd than for the vile to exalt themselves.
 “ Yet, who can humble the heart but he that made
 “ it? O thou Almighty Lord, who hast taken down
 “ many a proud heart, be pleased to take mine in
 “ hand, and get the same conquest over it. Keep
 “ every humbling consideration working in my
 “ mind; which may make me low in my own eyes,
 “ ready to give deference to others, and ever walk-
 “ ing humbly with my God. Amen.”

MEDI.

MEDITATION LXXVII.

Of a relenting heart.

TO be overtaken with faults, and fall into sin, is the sorrowful state of poor mortals; and the unavoidable appendage of human frailty. But that which some can very easily pass over, others do as grievously resent and lay to heart. Where wicked men are sturdy as rocks; and when they have done never so abominably, neither melt nor smay at the matter; as soon as the child of God perceives he has done an ill thing, his heart smites him; his conscience falls foul upon him; he is pricked with remorse of spirit, and torn with pangs of mind; and buffeted with those inward strokes, and wrung with such convulsions of soul, as make him feel to the quick, into what a sorry case he has thrown himself. The sin which at first shewed a fair face, after bites and stings like a serpent. That which promised mighty matters; to make him hasten into the snare, when there he is taken, discovers a horrid visage, and leaves the poor soul nothing but terror and damage, and sad repentance; and to recoil upon himself, and think what he has done. It cuts and breaks his heart; and throws him into bitterness, and anguish, and the shadow of death. It bows him down under the load, and makes him go mourning all the day long; so there is no rest in his bones, because of his sin; and no comfort can he find with his life, till he has humbled himself, and found a reconciled God.

And, O my soul, how great a blessing from the Lord, is such a tender heart! though for the time
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it puts us to pain, and makes us smart for our sins, and feel a hell in our souls; yet those very stripes are healing, and the sharp physic is preventing, to save us from lying for ever under the pains of an endless hell. For it is not so much the offence itself, as their impenitent continuance in it, that damns the wicked; seeing every penitent, however he has sinned, has the promise to be pardoned. O then what a privilege is it, for the poor obnoxious creature, upon such terms, to be taken into favour! and what a singular mercy from above, to have such a broken contrite heart, as the offended God will not despise! that when I have sinned, and am full of remorse for it; in his gracious account, I have again undone it; and he will not lay it to my charge, but upon my Saviour's score; and how black and foul soever it be, will blot it out as a thick cloud; and where my sin has abounded, his grace will abundantly pardon!

What then, my soul, so needful and good for me, can I beg of the Lord, as a soft and yielding heart, that shall not suffer me to sin without smart; a heart tender, as the apple of my eye, that will not endure the least mote in it; but grieves and weeps, till eased of it? such a heart will be my constant monitor, and faithful preserver, to keep me with my God; to fetch me back, when I go astray; and to set me right, when I do amiss. O that I had such a heart to give him, who calls for my heart! Lord, I give mine to thee, that it may be made such by thee. And never shall I envy any, that can sin most heinously; and bring themselves off as lightly: who, when they are the nicest men, to feel any hurt upon their bodies, and there a little grievance will extort their impatient cries; yet let sin make the saddest breaches and havock upon their poor souls, they have no sense, but drive on boldly, and carry it off pleasantly, and shew as brisk and
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jocund as if they ailed nothing. Nay, they can applaud themselves in the advantage they have over the child of God; to escape that godly sorrow, in which he pays so dear for his sin. And indeed, they may as well rejoice, that the devil has brought them to his bow, that he can do even what he will with them; and they feel no hurt by it, but rather take pleasure in it, and make their boast of it. And shall they so always escape? No such matter, the Lord knows; but shall once feel it the more, because they now feel it so little; and the more fearful still is their case, the less they are afraid. For there will at last be the more terrible feeling, when they are awakened out of the dead sleep, and the pleasant dream is gone, and all the heavy reckoning to come.

O my soul, here is the comfort then, that my case is not hopeless, as long as I am not senseless. For that which so troubles me; shall not undo me. Though my heart correct me; such blows are the kindness of a friend. And the wounding of my spirit, is medicinal, to prevent the loss of my soul. O how happy to know the worst of it in this life, and to have all my hell upon earth! let my conscience lash me for every offence: such seeming severity is the greatest mercy. Sweet sorrow now for sinning, that will keep me from eternal sorrowing! such discipline is like to make me good for something. Blessed therefore be the hand, that will thus break me off my sins! and so let me be chastened of the Lord, that I may not be condemned with the world.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** Where is my relenting heart, when I can
 “ count it but a small thing, to have com-
 “ mitted great sins; and after I have made bold to
 VOL. I. 3 A “ offend

“ offend, shew little concern to have my repentance
 “ keep pace with my offences? O thou great Ma-
 “ ker and Commander of hearts! make mine so
 “ soft, as to smite me for every evil whereof I have
 “ been guilty, and to hold me back from all known
 “ and wilful sins, as from the edge of the sword,
 “ and the violence of fire. That instead of allow-
 “ ing myself, in any way that is not good, I may
 “ never be at ease in my mind, till I am pleasing
 “ to my God. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXVIII.

Of the meek temper and carriage.

WHAT is meekness, my soul, but the moderating of our passionate resentments, and restraining of sinful anger, under injuries and sufferings? we may be angry, and not sin; yea, in some cases, it is sinful, not to be angry; but to seem well enough pleased with God's dishonour, and the ruin of souls. Indeed, zeal for the glory of our Lord, carries in it a mixture of anger; as the edge, to make it enter. And such anger at offenders, is very consistent with charity to our neighbours. Yea, love makes me angry with them, for admitting the things that threaten to destroy them. Our meek Saviour himself, as whom never any was so much abused, though never any so well deserved; he that bore all evil, though he never did the least; yet could not he contain, at the dishonour done to his Father. And the expressing of our anger at bold impiety, is so far from being any breach of charity, that the contrary tameness would indeed betray our falsehood and treachery. Though we must not
 mingle

mingle our own pets and quarrels with the vindication of God's glory ; as if our wrath would work his righteousness ; nor reek our spleen upon an adversary, under pretence of zeal for the Lord of Hosts ; yet a vehement concern, and burning heat in God's cause, is no more than becomes and behoves us. And then only does anger run into sin, when it is without cause, or for a wrong cause ; or above the deserts of the cause.

But, O my soul, how very cold have I been in the cause of my Lord ! and how exceeding hot in my own ? how apt to take fire at every provocation ? and grow all in a flame, even at the report of an affront ; yea, but the fancy of an injury ? how often has my bearing spirit been out of the way, when I had work for it ? and I have been readier to arm and fight, than to quench the passion, and pacify debate. O what is this, but the reverse to my blessed Saviour's mansuetude ; who had nothing offensive in him ; and yet when his words were wrested, his actions misinterpreted, and his person vilified and confronted ; could pass it away, and not be moved, unless with pity, at the mistakes and miscarriages of his rude and silly foes ? in such command of my passions, and such a spirit of forbearance, and such an even, sedate frame of mind (however I am used and tried) O may I shew myself his faithful follower ; and shew my care, to copy out the meekness and gentleness of Christ Jesus, who was known, wherever he came, by his good deeds, and not by his great noise. And when he has commanded me to learn of him, let me take heed, lest in struggling with my neighbour, I also strive for mastery with my Redeemer ; whether his gospel, or my fury, shall take place. O may I not be cross and bitter in my spirit ; sour and frantic in my house, rugged and litigious with my neighbours ; nor count it my disgrace, but my honour, to turn the
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the other cheek, and let go also the cloak, to bear contempts, and sit down by losses; and give courteous answers, and shew all mildness of carriage, and sweetness of manners. My soul! are occasions of offence offered? and it is fit they should be: else would it be no virtue or thanks for me, to be quiet. My business then is not to get clear of all trials; but to get strength to surmount, and rise above them. If I think, that any has given me reason, so to be out of patience: let me remember, that my Lord (for certain) has given me greater reason to obey his command. Have I a cholerick temper? but what signifies grace, unless to keep under unruly nature? and if I have well learned Christ; I shall not ask, who can endure it? nay, if I do but observe the sin and shame, and mischief of a froward humour, and fiery rage, into what drunkenness it throws the soul; what distorted looks, and loud clamour, and foul language, and frantic postures it produces; and in what a combustion and flame, it sets not only a house, but whole towns and neighbourhoods; sure then, I cannot be in love with such an ugly picture, when so fair a one is set over against it; even that meek and quiet spirit, which, not only in the sight of God, is of great price, but in the judgment of men, there is nothing so taking and recommending, to make one dear and delightful to all about him.

O then, my soul. when I am tried, and fore put to it, let me stop, and throw some water of consideration upon this fire, that the sparks may not rise up all into a flame. Let me hold, not only my hand, but my tongue; and keep in words, till I am fitter to use them, and so stifle the passion for want of vent. Let me not lie stirring in the hor-net's nest; nor engage in pugnacious disputes, nor draw the saw of contention; but behold the Lamb
of

of God, and be ashamed, to shew nothing of his mild spirit. When any injure and abuse me, let me not think, what advantage I have against them; but what an opportunity is now before me, to shew my deference to my Lord, and to transcribe his blessed copy, in making light of that, whereof another would make a mighty matter. Let me decline the pitiful, squabbling office; and turn away from the wrangles, to my prayers; so to mount myself up into those heavenly regions, where none of these blustering storms have any place; but all is calm, and sweet, and harmonious, without the least disturbance for ever,

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** LORD GOD, long-suffering, and slow to
“ anger; who bearest wonderfully with
“ them that provoke thee every day; teach me,
“ who have much more reason for it, meekly to
“ take abuses and injuries; and to imitate the for-
“ bearing and gentleness of my Lord, in not ren-
“ dering evil for evil, but overcoming the evil with
“ good. O help me to curb my angry resent-
“ ments; and to give place to other’s wrath, with-
“ out giving vent to my own. That I may pre-
“ serve the serenity of my mind, and sweeten the
“ spirits of my neighbours, and be a true follower
“ of my meek and lovely Saviour. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXIX.

Of hungering and thirsting after Righteousness.

ONE of the lowest signs of grace, is the desire of more grace. And such souls it argues to have tasted that the Lord is gracious, who do long still further to experience the heavenly gift. Thus even new born babes can desire suitable food; and yet even to such desires blessedness is assured, Mat. v. 6. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." Now all creatures in the world are full of desires: because no creature has a sufficiency in itself, like the blessed God, to be satisfied at home, without seeking any further. But yet, amidst the multitude of desires, O how rare be the desires that are right and good, sublime, and worthy? the thick crowd of covetous and ambitious, lustful, and revengeful desires, even choak up and stifle all the desires that are holy and heavenly. But, O my soul, may thy desire be to the things that are truly worth the desiring; and whereof thou shalt never have done with the enjoying; such as the God infinitely good, and his kingdom and righteousness: which are therefore the best of all fruitions, because spiritual and celestial, satisfying and everlasting. O may thy desire be to his name, who is the desire of all nations; to drink of the water of Bethlehem, and his cup of salvation, who there was born; to be found in Christ Jesus, having that righteousness which is by the faith of him: to share in all the righteousness, which he has fulfilled for us, that he may be the Lord, thy righteousness; and thou be made the righteousness of God in him, and that the Sun of Righteousness may

may rise to thee, with healing in his wings, to cashier thy darkness and distempers, and to fertilize thy soul, so that thou mayest abound in all the fruits of righteousness and true holiness: that I may not only be absolved from my sins, but sanctified in my soul, and renewed in the very spirit of my mind, and wrought up to such a holy habit, such a spiritual frame and heavenly disposition, that I may approve myself the same that I should be, in all holy conversation and godliness. O let me be uneasy, and in pain to be freed from the bondage, and cleansed from the pollution of my sins; and to have the blessed image after which I was created, new drawn upon my soul: yea, that I may grow in grace, and be still increasing with the increase of God. O that I may never lose my appetite to the bread of life; nor grow indisposed to the heavenly manna: nor only entertain some faint velleities, and transient wishes after the saving good; nor begin to desire grace, only after that I have sinned away all the seasons of grace, but have so keen a stomach, to the proper nutriment of my soul, that I may seek in the first place, and never be put off the craving humour, till in myself I find the promise happily verified, that I am filled!

Let the swine tread over perils, and the beasts of the people nauseate angels food; and all the worldly carnal herd, only hunt after meat for their lusts, and be all in a flame, to devour up those enjoyments, that shall never quench their thirst, but at last, poison and destroy their souls: O my soul, open thy mouth wide after somewhat else, that he who fills the hungry with good things, may satiate thy desires with better attainments. O lothe thyself, as long as thou lothest the heavenly repasts. Let Christ and his grace be so precious in thy esteem; that thou countest all things but loss and dung, to obtain them. Let me not only go over the words, [*that the*
rest

rest of my life may be pure and holy] but so pray them with my heart, that nothing in the world I may be so much set upon, as to tread down my sins, and find all things belonging to the spirit, live and grow in my soul; that I may be as holy as I can, where I cannot be so as I would; and at last may reach to see the new heaven and earth, where dwelleth righteousness, and God's holy place, where none of the filth that now annoys the world shall any more be found, but righteousness and holiness compleat shall be the garb and mean of every inhabitant, and even as the air, in which they all live and breathe. O blessed state, and joyful time, to all that now groan under the body of this death: and would so fain perfect holiness in the fear of God!

O my soul, canst thou content thyself, with the wretched gratifications, which the most here do take up with, to prefer puddle-water and trash, before a banquet of wine, and god-like entertainments? O pity the mean souls that look no higher, and fare no better. And shew that thou art born of the Spirit, in being spiritually-minded; and that thou art a new creature, by seeking after new delights; yea, the child of the Most High; because nothing will relish with thee, like the pleasures of thy Father's house. For alas, thou art not passed from death to life; but still even dead, if thy pulse do not thus beat. Whereas thy good appetite will discover, not only thy life, but thy health; and that health will be the very joy of thy life, and the sure earnest of a better life, that is quite above the reach of all death. For thou wilt be accepted, with thy willing mind. Yea, thy will to it, qualifies thee, "to drink of the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 7. The many sins then, that would stop thee out, shall be forgiven, when thou lovest much. And didst thou not indeed so love, thou wouldst not so desire. (Take that for thy comfort:) for what are desires, but fruits that spring from the
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the root of love? then cheer up, my soul, and doubt not, but that he who favours such desires, will once fulfil them; and answer thee in those wishes of thy heart, which are really the breathings of his own Spirit. And what thou wantest now of satisfaction to thy mind, shall then be made up to the full, when thou awakest with his likeness; and comest to the fountain head; even to the absolute fulness of all, that ever thou hast desired and tasted; where desires will cease; and the panting soul sweetly lose all its annihilation, in everlasting fruition.

THE PRAYER.

“ I DESIRE to be filled with more fervent desires,
 “ after thee, my God, and the great things of
 “ thy kingdom; to feel stronger passions this way,
 “ than any way else in the world. O divert my
 “ thirst, from broken cisterns, to the fountain of
 “ living waters. Dull my appetite to the vanities
 “ which this world affords; and inflame my long-
 “ ings after the true, holy, saving good, which thy
 “ word recommends. May it be the desire of my
 “ soul such to be, and so to do, as thou wouldest
 “ have me, and the desires which thou, Lord, in-
 “ spiest into me, O make them efficacious, to pro-
 “ mote the blessed ends desired by me: that I may
 “ not only wish, but come to enjoy, all the glorious
 “ acquisitions of thy kingdom everlasting. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXX.

Of growing in Grace.

MY soul, there must be life, before there can be growth: and the beginnings of spiritual, as well as natural life, use to be very small, and scarce perceivable at first. There is the day break, and twilight, before the perfect day, and clear light. And there is the embryo, the infant, the child, the youth, before the strong and perfect man. There is a seed of life sown in the renewed soul: and that seed is like the little mustard seed; that makes a very poor appearance, when there it enters: yet he that despises not the day of small things, which himself has planted, looks upon it with a watchful eye, and will follow it with an especial blessing. O what great matter of gladness and thankfulness then is it, to perceive any change, and translation here from a natural state, to a state of grace. To have Christ formed in us, or but any rudiments of the new creature drawn upon us: to come to see our sins, and see death and hell in them, and resolve against them, and break off from them: to see all the pomp and pleasures, and fulness of this world, as empty and beggarly and disgraceful in our eyes; and the eternal things of another world, most amazing and worthy of all our highest regard, to find and bewail the want of grace, and so admire and prize it, as still to breathe and long after it; to favour and relish the things of the Spirit of God, which once we did not care for; and stand well affected to all that is holy and heavenly, to have our faces set towards the new Jerusalem,

as those that are in earnest bound for heaven. These are the good beginnings, that accompany salvation; and look hopeful and promising, for a blessed conclusion. For God's dearest children were little, before they became great in his kingdom; and low in grace before they attained to be high in his favour. He graciously accepts of the desires of the humble; the groans of their spirits, the purposes of their hearts, the weak endeavours of their hands; and he will not see the new principle overwhelmed and lost; but will cherish and improve it, till it rise up victorious over all that oppose it.

But yet, my soul, thou must not think it enough, to be got into that better state, where thou hast the truth of grace; nor there lay down thy staff, and set up thy rest; but rouse thyself, and get forward, to make thy progress and profiting appear: and stir up the grace of God that is in thee; and make thy use and benefit of the price put into thy hands. If thou hast done any thing well, yet must thou not think that sufficient; nor be weary of well doing, but press on towards the mark; increase with the increase of God; and abound in the work of the Lord. And though the grace, (it is true,) is the gift of God, yet hast thou thy part here to act, and must strive to enter the gate of life, and work out thy own salvation; and not hide thy talents in the earth, but trade with them, for the glory of thy Lord, and to promote thy own comfortable accounts. O let not the precious stock then lie dead upon thy hands, but lay it out both for thy own and others advantage, and labour more abundantly, though it is not thou, but the "grace of God, that is with thee," 1 Cor. xv. 10. And not thy pains, but his pound, that gains the ten pounds, Luke xix. 10. Nor think it enough to feel some full tides of better desires, and flowing affections: but set it in thy heart, to grow strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; to bear much fruit, to do

do great actions, to accomplish worthy intentions; to be full of good works, and more able, bravely to resist temptations, both on the prosperous, and the adverse part; more chearfully to obey, and more patiently to suffer, the will of God. That thou mayst not stand at a stay; but still be getting ground, and making thy way on to the glorious end.

O my soul! have I lived so long under the light of the gospel, and all the means of grace, and do I find so little stirring and thriving in my spiritual state, after so many years? what a confounding thing is this, that I should be cast behind hand, and others that set out in the vineyard a great while after me should get the start of me, and much out-do and exceed me? when God has been pleased to speak life to me, shall I continue a poor starveling, and as a dead thing, like the picture of a tree, like the image of a child, never taller or bigger, but still the same, if not growing like a dead stake in a hedge, to rottenness, and only worse and worse? O may I shew, that the root of the matter is in me, by some better productions to be seen upon me. May I not frustrate all the planting and watering of the ministry; to render it without any good effect upon me: least I find it also the favour of death to me, and the aggravation of damnation upon me. May I not abuse myself, with a proud opinion of my present attainments; to think, (with Laodicea,) I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing: when the Lord knows, I am exceedingly wanting; and have need to grow a great deal more, and ought to be much better. O let me not harbour any sin, nor lie in that wickedness, without repentance, till I be a worm or canker, with lie corroding at the heart, if a very root and heart of the plant to which I am growing and flourishing, it will turn to a rot, and droop and fade, as a nipt and withered thing. Nor let me be determined by custom,

custom, and the way of any men of the world, who seem to mind no manner of growth, but only in wealth, and to advance and prosper in their temporal estate. O how eager are they for the world's good, as if it were the only good? but the good of God's grace, alas, how is it despised in their eyes, and lothed in their very hearts? they would not have it; and while they are so fond and mad upon the world, they cannot. No, "the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choak the word; and they become unfruitful," Mat. xiii. 22. Whatever then they hear, it is even nothing to them, and all lost upon them. They are so full of somewhat else, there is no entrance for it. And being so fast engaged, they cannot abide to be taken off. But the very preachers of that grace of God, which brings salvation, are a fore offence to them; because (in this wild excursion,) they offer to check them.

O my soul! see, and dread this snare, and bane of souls: and be jealous of every thing in the world, that would chill and quench thy desires of grace, and still more grace. O look upon this, as the rich treasure indeed, and here learn even of worldlings, to be keen and earnest; but to another and better purpose, than they use to shew their mettle and vehemence. Let it be for that, which will make thee rich towards God, and set thee up for ever. Be all for that word of God, which is the bread of life; to make thee strong in the Lord: and for those pious books, that open and set it home, and for the company of gracious Christians, whose conversation is an especial means of edification, and their very words are apt to minister grace to the hearers. And by thy faith, and thy prayers, O fly to the very fountain of all grace, out of that infinite fulness, to derive and draw the grace sufficient for thee, to help thee above thy sins and temptations, thy doubts and despondencies. Yea, go to the Lord Jesus, in the great ordinance

ordinance of his holy feast, to eat and drink thy health and strength, in that meat indeed ; that are enough even to quicken the dead ; and to increase strength to them, that have no might. O let thy faith be ever and anon eyeing and applying this Lord, thy strength and thy Redeemer ; who came, that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. He is thy head, my soul, without whom thou canst not live at all : and by virtue and influence from whom, thou mayst not only live, but flourish, and abound in every good work. O look to him, and call upon him ; that he may set up the cripple to walk, yea, to run the way of his commands, and to leap for joy of his salvation. Implore his grace, as a refreshing shower, to descend upon thee, and enrich thy barren soil. For here mayst thou be lawfully, and laudably covetous : yea, the more thou cravest of him, the more welcome shalt thou be to him. O never think it enough then of that, whereof thou canst never have too much. When there is no stint here to set thy growth : but the utmost term of thy magnitude, and period of thy proceeding, is this, that thou mayst grow in grace, even till thy head touch heaven, and thy present grace be fully perfected in eternal glory.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**HE good of the chosen, O Lord, is a spiritual
 “ treasure of infinite wealth. But O how little
 “ have I attained to, compared with what I am
 “ capable of ? my stock is poor and low : and here I
 “ would not be contented with such things as I have.
 “ But O thou ever overflowing fountain, full of all
 “ that I want, give me, I beseech thee, those best of
 “ all gifts, more plenteously to enjoy. As thou hast
 “ spoken life to my soul, and made me pant and
 “ breathe after the living God, so let me receive still
 further

“ further supplies out of thy eternal fulness; to
 “ strengthen the good things in me, that are faint,
 “ and ready to die; and to cherish and improve the
 “ life of grace in my soul, that I may not have it, in
 “ a low languishing estate, but more abundantly;
 “ and find it still growing upon me, till it be perfect-
 “ ed in the blessed life of glory. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXXI.

Of the public spirit.

O My soul, how sad is that complaint of the
 Apostle, Phil. ii. 21. “ All seek their own;
 “ not the things of Jesus Christ!” all in a manner,
 are thus taken up, yea, swallowed up, at home;
 and shrivelled together in a narrow selfishness;
 every one minding and caring for nothing farther,
 than his private ease, lucre, or honour; as if he
 were born only for himself, and had no concern at all
 for the community, whereof he is a member; and
 none, to speak of, that have such large hearts and
 public spirits, as to devote and give themselves, to
 serve the ends and interests of their great Lord; to
 espouse his cause, to assert his rights, and promote
 his holy religion in the world. Here even they
 that can be as pragmatical as any, upon other ac-
 counts, will yet excuse themselves, that they are not
 for meddling, nor making a stir and bluster; but to
 follow their own occasions, and be quiet, and live
 in peace, and fair agreement with all. Nay, here
 the veriest tatlers, will not move a tongue; unless
 it be, to reproach the pious designs. And the
 greatest busy-bodies will not lift up a foot, nor a
 finger, unless it be, to throw some rub in the way.
 They

They are as silent as mutes, they are as stiff as images, when they should appear, as becomes every faithful Christian, to suppress wickedness, to give some stop to the inundation of open profaneness, to advance the glory of God, and the everlasting salvation of precious souls. Then they grow cross and surly (with Cain) what, am I my brother's keeper? what have I to do, to make myself a censor of others manners? must I take upon me, to be a reformer of the world? how can I help it, if men will undo themselves? my speaking and acting, is never like to effect such wonders as to amend the matter. And therefore I am resolved to let the world alone, to rub on in its course; for it will do as it will, whether I will or not.

But after all the fine plea, my soul, is not this more like a renegade, than a faithful soldier and servant of Christ Jesus? When himself hath said it; Matt. xii. 30. "He that is not with me, is against me." And can I be with him in my heart, and not, upon occasion (out of the abundance of my heart) speak with my mouth, and act with my hand? am not I deeply engaged, to do all that I am able, for my best and greatest Lord? and can I go back, or stand neuter; but I must be perjured, and a traitor? can I play on both sides; but I shall betray myself false hearted and a sly enemy, otherwise disposed? O is not my carnal mind, and love of this world (more than my obliging temper, and love of my neighbour) indeed the hindrance in my way, that I am no more concerned! is it not to keep in the whole skin, and to please my flesh; more than to keep in with conscience, and to please the Lord? is it not more to escape the trouble, than for fear of doing an ill thing; that I come not to the help of the Lord, against the mighty? because I think them too big for me, and that I shall have the worst of it among them? this indeed is to be wary;

wary; but here can no caution be a bar to my duty. And if I will be wise overmuch; while I so aim to be wiser than I ought, I am not so wise as I should be. In good truth, how can I ever be wise and not faithful? when my greatest sagacity lies in my fidelity; because I serve a Lord, that will never suffer me to be a final loser, by following of him; through whatever difficulties and hardships he calls me. But the greater hardships I have sustained, the better rewards with him shall I find. And how little need I then to regard, though the world should call me incendiary, and troubler of Israel; if I can but hear from him, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

To him, my soul, let it be ever my highest care, to approve myself, leaving all the world for him; and not sticking to disoblige any in the world, when it is to observe and honour him. Let me infinitely prefer his mighty interests above all my petty concerns, and never count it a sorry bargain, though I offered up all that I had, and myself after it, in the cause and obedience of such a Lord. And how shall I shew myself a true philanthropos, but in doing all the good I can to all men? not to humour them, to their hurt; but to make them for ever happy; though, for the time, I may make them a little uneasy. First must I regulate things within doors; and take care, that my own soul be safe; and then seek the good of Jerusalem, and take upon me the care of the church, and of the world; opening my arms, to receive even all mankind, and lending myself, as far as I am capable, to every one. For Israel was called an empty vine, when he "brought fruit but to himself," Hof. x. 1. And my Lord's command is, "when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," Luke xxii. 32. Though my goodness then will not extend to the Lord, yet it must be shewed, in doing all the good that I can

to all men. And can I hear of the idolatry and superstition, and persecution abroad. The sad darkness of Heathens, the strong delusion of Antichrist's followers, and the sharp trials of my brethren, whom they harass (hear of it) with an unrelenting heart? can I stand by, and see the calamities of my neighbourhood, and of my nation, as nothing to me? can I hug myself, that I, and my particular stock are exempted, whatever any else do suffer? no, I sympathize with them (if they be the members of Christ) as very parts of myself; and though they be such as are not yet gathered, I even travail in birth for them, till Christ be formed in them! my head and heart are working what to do in their case, and how to mend the matter with their souls. All the wit, and power, and interest, that I have, thus do I think it best bestowed. And any work set a foot, that looks hopeful, to help on such a glorious design, as the public good, and the reformation of the world, my heart is with it; and all my ability shall most readily be contributed to it. And, O that I may live to better purpose yet in the world than I have done, and be an instrument of greater good in my generation than I have been! and where I have not the temporal advantages, which many others enjoy, yet may I not cease to employ my labours and my prayers, that the kingdom of our Lord may come in power; and that sin and Satan may be trodden under foot; and the wicked turn, and the godly rejoice; and pure religion and undefiled, prevail and flourish; and God in all things be glorified, through Jesus Christ.

THE PRAYER.

“**T**O be narrow souled, hears ill from the world; but I desire, O Lord, to be clear
 “ from that blame, not only for the shame with
 “ men,

men, but the sin against God, because it is an omission of my needful duty; in neglecting the care of that body to which I belong; and which is of vastly greater worth, than I (a single diminutive part) am. And though I have not ability to effect what I would for the church, or the world; yet give me, O my God, a hearty concern for both; to desire, that all men living may share with me, in thy mercy and bounty; according to every one's particular case and necessity. And to my prayers, let me join my utmost endeavours, to promote the conversion of sinners, the prosperity of thy servants, the flourishing of religion, and the salvation of souls; that thou, O blessed God, mayest be glorified by us all, through Jesus Christ. Amen."

M E D I T A T I O N LXXXII.

Of being in charity with all men.

My soul! to love my neighbour, is to love every partaker of human nature, who is a member of the same great body, to which I do belong; made after the same image, and capable of the same glory of God as myself. And I must love him as myself, in my favourable opinion, and my good words of him; and not only in wishing him well, but endeavouring also to do him good. And not putting him off with compliments and lies, to profess the love which I have not, nor hardening my heart against him, and being unconcerned for him, without any fellow-feeling of his wants and miseries; but having the cordial kindness for him; and that, to be shewed, upon every proper occasion, not

not only to his body, but also, and especially, to his soul, to promote his faith, his holiness, and so, his highest good, and his everlasting happiness. For to give bread to the hungry, and clothes to the naked, how small a matter is it, and even nothing, to the charity of turning a sinner from the error of his way, and winning a soul to God? but if any will not see nor resent this love, yet is it nevertheless for that. Indeed there is no affection valuable and hearty, deserving the name of love, separate from this true and noble, and best and chiefest of all love, to the soul. Though (it is true) I may seek heaven for myself, before, and more, than I do for another; yet would I not have him excluded, but to share also in the bliss as well as myself. Yea, let him be never so much my enemy, yet do I desire, that God may forgive him, and receive him. And though he be never so vile and ungodly, I desire his conversion and reformation, and consequently his real felicity and everlasting salvation. So far am I from wishing damnation, even to such as I would convince of their damnable condition; that I threaten them with it, only to scare them from it. For I would not have even the worst alive to perish, if I could help it, but would much rejoice in his repentance, and be glad with all my heart, that he might turn and live. Thus, my soul, it is not to confine my kindness only to my own kindred, or to love none but such as love me, or jump and agree with me, and fit my purpose, and serve my ends. No, but my love (like the sun) must look sweet upon all. Though I am not to love all alike, neither in the same measure, nor after the very same manner; but to love them more or less, according to the greater or lesser goodness and loveliness that they have in them; and to love the good and godly, with a love of delight and complaisance, so as to take pleasure in them; when I

can

can love ill ungodly men, only with a love of pity and benevolence, so as to be sorry for them, and wish the matter amended with them; and to contribute what lies in my way, to recover and save them. Yea, in such a way, may I express my love to them as does not please them; and for my freedom and boldness with them, may be spighted by them as an enemy to them, when yet if I did not so admonish and rebuke them, I could not be their friend indeed, nor bear to them the hearty love. I may be grieved at them, and contend with them; yea, and lothe them, so as I do myself, *i. e.* as far as sinful; but I do not (I dare not) hate them; nor wish them any hurt, but what may be for their greater good; as, that justice may be done upon them, to restrain them, and to warn others from following them; to have them here so corrected, that they may not be for ever damned. And let them call it a malicious grudge, when any one checks and interrupts them in their wicked way; he that should "suffer the sin upon them, would really hate them," Lev. xix. 17. For where, alas, is the love, when I will not offer to stop one, that I meet even running upon hell? but the reprehension of sinners, is indeed so far from being a violation of love; that it is one of the clearest demonstrations of unfeigned friendship, that can be shewed in the world. And never can I be a right lover, if I am not (as occasions offered) a free reprover. I cannot therefore but scorn their notions of love, with whom nothing passes for kind, but what helps to pamper lusts, and murder souls; and instead of stopping a sinner, will rather laugh at him, and applaud him, and lend their assistance to pack him to the devil. They seem to know no love, but lust; no charity, but the loose fraternity; no friendship, but their revelling fellowship; and cry out of the uncharitableness of all that find any fault

fault with them, and condemn all the righteous and sober for censorious and sour, and complain what little love there is in the world; only that the drunkards, whoremongers, and trusty soldiers of the kingdom of darkness are combined as fast friends together. And so they love their neighbours as themselves; and may I never use my worst enemies so bad as they do themselves and their dearest friends!) from such kind of love, good Lord, deliver us; when that goes for all the love, which is but an ungodly confederacy, yea, downright iniquity, without a mystery. Such boasters of good fellowship will shortly find no cause at all to glory in the dearneſs and charity of that cursed league and brotherhood in iniquity. They will be deadly sick of it themselves, when all the cups and the mirth, that hold them a while together, shall fail them, and death and judgment overtake them.

But, my soul, where I cannot have a peculiar kindness for some, that take the course to beat it back from themselves, though I cannot be fond of them, or take satisfaction in them, as long as they will be a plague to the neighbourhood, and grief of heart to all that fear and love God, yet will I not be deficient in any principles of good-will, or any offices of love, whereby I may approve myself to God, and to all judicious observers, to be none of their enemy for telling them the truth, and endeavouring to pluck them out of the snare and condemnation of the devil; but a much kinder friend and better neighbour than such as take no notice, unless to rejoice in their iniquity, and never grieve or care to see them perish, but rather encourage the vile doing, which will bring them to the sad reckoning.

Let

Let them be never so bad, or never so much my foes, though I cannot love them for their wickedness, nor think myself obliged to be so unreasonably tender of them, as to suffer them to undo me, when I have a lawful way to avoid it (however the way may not please them) nor that I am obliged to see them undo themselves, and I do nothing to pull them as brands out of the fire, because they may resent it as an affront and an injurious assault, yet will I still love them as far as I may, without being an enemy to God and myself, and my country. For I must not be *felo de se*, nor a traitor to God, and the public, out of a compliment to any enemy. Love them I will, as far as they bear God's image, and share in his patience and kindness, and because he commands me to imitate him, who does good to the evil. Yet as himself chastens whom he loves, so may I be angry with them that have ill used me, and see cause to make them sensible of the evil, when notwithstanding I am ready to forgive them, and to be friends with them, and do good to them, and would fain have all the causes of separation and unkindness removed out of the way, that the current of affection may fluently take its delightful course. I must still make a difference, and cannot be intimate with every body; for such a particular friendship is at my choice, as I find occasion for it; but even they shall have my tender bowels of compassion, whom I cannot take into the warm embraces of a dearer affection: for, a sincere love and good will, is no more than I owe to all, and that is not at my liberty to dispose of it after my humour; but even such as worst deserve it from me shall have it of me, and there shall not be a person in the world, to whom I bear malice and hatred in my heart.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**HOUGH my peculiar dearness is owing to the generation of thy children, O Lord ; and they shall have my warm heart, whose hearts are set upon thee, and thy ways : (for I cannot but make a difference in my affections, where the difference is so great in others qualifications) ; yet a good will and real kindness let me entertain and cherish in my breast towards all men, and not harbour spight and enmity against any one. Nor let me only profess friendship, and wish well to my neighbours, but be ready to the offices of love, and to contribute all that they can reasonably expect from me, to do them real good, and to promote their happiness, here and for ever. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXXIII.

Of living peaceably with all men.

TO live peaceably with all men, is a duty, upon supposition, “ if it be possible,” Rom. xii. 18. where the difficulty is implied, and the possibility seems to be doubted. For so perverse are some, they will never be quiet : nothing can content them. But all that we are able, we must endeavour ; as much as in us lies ; to the utmost of our power : that nothing, on our side, may be wanting, to compass the happy attainment. O my soul, as I am a Christian, I am obliged to be of a quiet disposition, of
a healing

a healing temper, of friendly principles, and peaceable purposes. My heart must not be the seat of war, nor the forge of mischief, nor the harbour of enmity; but full of care to prevent disturbance, and where I cannot hinder, there to make up breaches. I must shun the occasions of strife, and such distasteful matters, as are like to set all to pieces. I must not throw in the bones of dissention, nor offer any just provocation, to exasperate the minds of my neighbours, but rather pluck the fewel from off the fire; and hold in those expressions of choler, which are like gunpowder, threatening danger, to blow up all the fair fabric of peace and love. I must pursue the probable methods of recovering peace, where it is lost, and of keeping friendship on the wheels, where it does remain. It is not enough, to say, I am for peace, and that I have no malice; when others do find me bitter and fiery, stiff and implacable. But I must stoop, I must labour, yea and sometimes pay for peace: though it cost me so dear, as some of my honour, or my advantage in the world. And when all is done, if my endeavours prove abortive, and my peaceable overtures fail of the desired success; this may, notwithstanding quiet my mind, that I attempted, though I was baffled; and if the offences must needs come, that they came not by me, and where I cannot make reconciliation, that the fault of the miscarriage lies at others doors, and I have strove to please God; though I could not please every one else.

But, O my soul, how shall I keep peace with the wicked, to whom there is no peace; and whom the best of the churches, Rev. ii. 2. *could not bear?* to say and do as they, I dare not. And yet where I cannot be like to them; that is enough to make a quarrel with them; and to rebuke them, may be to lose them. I am loth to offend men, and give them any disturbance, yet must I not offend God, and break

the peace of my own mind ; neither will I so nicely stand upon my reputation ; as to neglect any fitting office, for fear of hearing pragmatikal and turbulent. For I am sensible, how many of my betters have borne blame and reproach, even for doing their heavenly Father's business, and the kindest part for poor miserable souls. Our blessed Saviour himself, that great peace-maker, who had peace on earth proclaimed before him, at his entrance into the world, and left peace as his legacy behind him, when he was departing from it ; yet tells us, that he came not to send peace withal, but fire and sword ; to rouse the sinners at ease, that were settled on their lees. Nor will I count it any breach of his peace, to plead, yea and contend for truth and holiness, with the enemies of both, but rather approve myself Christ's faithful foldier, in opposing such, as would adulterate the faith, or debauch the manners of Christians. And though it procure me present anger, for making so bold with them, it may bring me future thanks, for the favour done to them. Yet, still will I strive lawfully ; and proceed in no ways but warrantable and orderly : nor do a bad thing, to give them, who have a bad cause, occasion to fall upon me, where they cannot defend themselves, and to shelter their own crimes, under my misconduct. Though I will abate them nothing of God's truth ; yet will I give them no true cause of a quarrel, in the way of my appearing for it : nor let loose the reins to wrath, and return them like for like ; but shew them a more excellent way ; even that way of peace, which they have not known. For I must not walk as a mere man, who is naturally quarrelsome, and revengeful ; but as the child of God, whose wild and savage nature is changed by grace, to make him also the child of peace. I must bear with abusive words, and rugged manners, and not run to the violent remedy ; unless in case of necessity, nor violate the
gospel,

gospel, in going to the law; nor lose my love and charity, in seeking to defend my right and property. As I would not be a tale-bearer; so neither a suit promoter: but forbear the litigious trade, mortify the lusts warring in my members, from whence come wars and fightings, and not run things to the utmost extremities, upon all offered injuries. No, I must bear with others; as I have the greatest need to be borne with myself, and not be easy to be provoked; nor hard to be reconciled: but reckon condescension to be more for my reputation; than to carry on, and lengthen out the contention: yea, and be more proud of the honour, to conquer myself, than my antagonist; unless it be, in kindness and love, and shew greater sharpness and severity, in suppressing the enemies of my own house than any others. I will carry fair, and just, and wary, in all the ways of my duty, that so, pleasing the Lord, he may make my enemies to be at peace with me. And if that will not still keep me out of the briars; yet will it give me peace within, to support and comfort me, under all the cross occurrences abroad. I will study to be quiet myself, and I will lay out my wit, and strength, and interest, to make and keep peace between others. And where I cannot so prevail, by any conduct of my own; I will apply myself to him, who sets bounds to the raging of the sea, and the madness of the people; to calm the tumultuous motions of contending parties, and to dispose all hearts, (which he has in his hands,) to seek peace, and ensue it; and to follow after all the things, that do make for it; that I may have the pleasant prospect, to see all about me, live in unity and love, and the peace of God; striving only, to do one another good; and who shall exceed the rest, in all condescension, courtesy, and obliging conversation.

THE

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** MY God! I would not be a man of strife,
 “ nor a troubler of the world; but peaceable
 “ in my own temper and manners, and a promoter
 “ of peace, and fair accord among my neighbours.
 “ Such therefore as cannot think with me, O help
 “ me to bear with them. And such as are against
 “ me, let me not set myself against them: but by
 “ yielding to them, and doing for them, strive to
 “ conquer the enmity of my foes, and make them
 “ my friends. Yea, such as are thy enemies, O Lord,
 “ yet let me not reprobate, but compassionate them;
 “ and so fairly deal with them, as to gain upon
 “ them; and pray them, in Christ’s stead, to be re-
 “ conciled unto God. O make me meek and pa-
 “ tient, humble and condescending, courteous and
 “ obliging: to conciliate friendship, and imitate the
 “ God of peace, who thus winnest our hearts, by thy
 “ surprizing mercy, thy wonderful bounty, and thy
 “ utterly undeserved love, in Christ Jesus. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXXIV.

Of the giving Charity.

O MY soul, what, in all the word of God, is
 more recommended and commanded, than
 giving to the poor, and relieving the necessity of
 such as are in extremity? and yet, alas, what in all
 the world dost thou see more neglected, and slight-
 ed, by many that are most concerned, and that have
 the greatest ability? who, in stopping their ears to
 the

the cry of their needy brother, do at the same time also stop them against the voice of their glorious Maker: when he not only sends the poor man, as his messenger, to receive, of what he has put into their hands; but also charges them (as his stewards,) to look upon such, and distribute to them, according to the exigence of their case. And so he has made their gift indeed a debt: and it is not only an office of kindness; but a piece of justice, for them to bestow it. And their Lord will reckon with them, not only as cruel, to his indigent creatures; but as rebellious against his righteous laws, to refuse it.

Yet O the shifts and excuses, and sometimes false doctrines, that they will coin, to save the coin in their purses: when it should go to any charitable purpose? and he shall be looked upon, even as a robber or oppressor, that comes upon any such craving errand to them. Nay, even they that can spend, as if the world were under their feet, when it is to promote the designs of debauchery; and care not what they throw away, upon such laudable occasions, to serve their master, and help to people his black kingdom, can yet shew themselves as pinching as any men in the world, to do any real good, with what they have of the world's good. They will pour down a shilling, among their companions, as if it were nothing worth: but not part with a penny to any of the members of Christ: no, the ravenous lusts leave nothing for God's poor: but back, and belly, liquorish palate, extravagant fancy, or infinite avarice, are the devouring gulfs, to swallow all, that should go to the uses of mercy and charity.

But, O my soul, why has God given to some, so much more than he has to others; that they swim in all abundance, when many of their poor brethren would be glad of the very scraps and crumbs which feed their dogs? is it, that they should be as a well sealed, to inclose all to their own use? to wrap up
themselves

themselves within themselves; and keep the pelf so sticking to their fingers, as if it were a part of their very selves? or only to maintain their own port and pomp, and pripe, and luxury? to regale themselves with the fat, and the sweet; while others lie pining, and starving, and can hardly get, but to preserve life. No sure, the kind Parent of the universe had a worthier design, in his unequal distributions: that the rich and full should be as fountains opened, and springs running over; with their superfluities to water and refresh the lower grounds: that where God has given enough for all; there should be no lack to any. They are his almoners, appointed to dispense abroad, to the necessitous objects that his providence lays before them; and to do even as themselves, (in such narrow, and wretched circumstances) would reasonably expect, and be glad to receive. And if ever they think of making any account of their stewardships, I cannot devise what good and comfortable account they can ever hope to make; who carry all like mere proprietors: as if the whole were so clearly their own; that God and his poor had nothing to do with any of it. One would think, they never read or heard the xxvth chapter of St. Matthew; where works of mercy are made the main standard, by which the judge of quick and dead, will distribute everlasting rewards and punishments to all, in the great and last day: and they shall hear, Depart, ye cursed, or come, ye blessed, thereafter as they have been cruel or kind to the poor members of Christ Jesus. When they shall be called to answer, what they did with all that they had: whether they honoured the Lord with their substance: and, according to his order, 1 Tim. vi. 18. did good, and were rich in good works: or else, minded only to serve themselves, and to feed their own covetous or lustful humour, and were penurious and close-fisted to a distitute brother; hated the sight of a poor man; and

and would sooner give him a stone, than bread. Though they may insist upon their justice, and the liberty they have, to do what they will with their own, yet would they be wise to consider, that they are no such perfect owners; but what they possess is more another's, than theirs; and they are not to do any thing with it, but what is meet and good in his sight. They must not pinch upon his poor, to flesh themselves; nor hold their hands, where he has obliged them to bestow. Deut. xv. 11. "I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thy hand wide to thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." Heb. xiii. 16. "To do good, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Luke xi. 41. "Give alms of such things as ye have." And the more is given to you, the more will be required of you: not only to do some good, but to abound in so doing: "ready to distribute, willing to communicate," 1 Tim. vi. 18. Do not therefore suffer yourselves to be outdone, and put to shame, by a charitable man, that has not peradventure the twentieth part of your ability; nay, when even the day-labourer, that may think, he has more need to steal, than to give, yet out of his honest gains, (*he*) is to spare somewhat, for such as have not his ways of getting, to help themselves, Eph. iv. 28. For those then who come by it so easily, and swell and abound in store, to engross all to themselves, and allow nothing to the poor, but snarl, and hard words; O how cruel and intolerable! and to plead, that they took nothing from their neighbour, by any rapine, or injury; will that serve for their apology? how idle is that thought? when we do not read, Luke xvi. that Dives was doomed to hell, for extorting from others: but for keeping all to himself, and letting Lazarus lie at his gate, and find no kindness but what he had from the dogs.

I could

I could wish that some of them, who seem to have a great honour for the reverend Dr. Hammond's memory, would think fit to follow the example of his charity, which I cannot but count most worthy of imitation. And where it is not perfectly copied out, yet would I beg of as many as I could prevail with, to join with me, in coming somewhat near it. For all his ways of shewing mercy, I recite not, but one expedient, founded (I suppose,) on Cor. xvi. 2. I have long had in my eye, as most remarkable: that the tenth part of his income, still as he received it, he set apart, in the poors box, lying by him: and then looked upon it as a devoted thing, and no longer his own: that so he might never be under the temptation of any lothness to part with it, when the property was thus alienated; and he should be never the poorer, so to bestow it; but only have the satisfaction, to deliver it out upon occasion, and ease himself of the trouble, to keep the maintenance of others. But I fear, least some who can much praise the great man, are furthest from the copying out of his good deeds: and among all the uses, to which they condemn their money, never remember the best use of all: and will sooner let it fly, to do abundance of mischief, than any such good, in their generations.

O my soul, what better is to be expected from such, whose way and principle is no better, than to turn God's Word and worship out of doors? and then, where he is no more regarded within, no wonder that his poor fare so bad without. But how shall I keep up a charitable opinion of the professors of religion, that pure religion and undefiled, which is, to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," James i. 27. When they only put forth the broad leaves of piety, but are barren in producing any fruits of charity, and even as hard and griping as any? let these religious misers answer

swer for themselves, as they can; I dare not undertake to bring them off with any credit, who do thus bring all their religion in suspicion, and starve their own profession. For it is the nature and honour of our Christianity, that it teaches us to be large hearted and open handed, like those worthy patterns of charity, 2 Cor. viii. 3. "To our power, yea, and beyond our power, willing of ourselves:" shewing such forwardness and readiness to every good work, that no need of extorting, squeezing, and screwing that out of us, which flows fluently from the principle in us. And can they be, what they would be taken for, "followers of God" as dear children, when the elect of God put on "bowels of mercies," Col. iii. 12. And "the love of God dwells not in that man, who sees his brother have need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him," 1 John iii. 13. But the godly man is renewed after the divine image, and made herein like unto God, "merciful as his Father in heaven is merciful," Luke vi. 37. That man does nearest resemble the blessed God, who needs the fewest things himself, and does the most good to others. Yea, all men shall be judged, not by their pretended faith, but by their real works. For though my works (it is true) cannot save me without Christ, yet will not Christ himself save me without my works. And in that account which he has given of the final judgment, he acquaints the world, that he will have more regard to merciful works, than any other works.

O my soul, let me then be kind to myself, in extending kindness to others; and look upon the opportunities of charity, as the happy occasions of my own greatest advantage, when I have the door opened even to heaven, and may not only do the thing of good report (which many make themselves so scandalous and accursed for omitting) and at pre-

sent refresh my own bowels, even more than my needy brother's, when I am eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor, and even in God's stead to the distressed; but by such small matters (in due time rightly disposed of) may do so great good to my soul, as to "lay up in store a good foundation against the time to come, that I may lay hold on eternal life," 1 Tim. vi. 19. and entitle myself to the kingdom of heaven, Matt. xxv. 34. That by giving what I cannot keep, I may obtain what I can never lose.

I will therefore devise liberal things, and study to lay out all I can spare, to another sort of advantage than what is commonly intended in the world. I will retrench my own needless expences, that I may have the more for charitable uses. I will have tender bowels, a large heart, and open hand, according to the ability which God has given me. Yea, I will draw out my very soul to the hungry; my heart shall not be grieved, when I give to my poor brother, Deut. xv. 10. No, instead of grudging to part with it, I may rejoice to make such an improvement of it: for, what is it, but to sow plentifully, that I may reap plentifully? and, if men will trust the earth with their seed, how much more may I trust God with my alms? if they reckon the more to enrich themselves the more they sow, what need I fear to be impoverished by whatever I lend to the Lord; where I may hope, not only for five or six per cent. but a hundred fold, for one? I have his Word for it, Prov. xxviii. 27. "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack," Luke vi. 38. "Give, and it shall be give unto you." Eccles. xi. 1, 2. "Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it, after many days. Give a portion to seven, and also to eight; for thou knowest not, what evil shall be on the earth." What is so cast out then, I will not count it thrown down the river, but

but laid out upon a most gainful adventure. And let trouble come, I will expect to fare never the worse, but the better: for "blessed is he that confiders the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble," Psal. xli. 1. This is but to make me friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness; that when I fail here, I may be, "received into everlasting habitations," Luke xvi. 9. And such spending will provide better for my house, than all the sparing; instead of throwing down, it will build it up: by entailing the blessing of Heaven upon it. For he that "disperseth, and giveth to the poor, his righteousness endures for ever: his horn shall be exalted with honour," Psal. cxii. 9. "But whoso stoppeth his ear to the cry of the poor: he shall cry himself, but shall not be heard," Prov. xxi. 13. "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewn no mercy," James ii. 13. As Dives, that would not give a crumb to the beggar on earth, could not get a drop, when himself begged for it in hell.

O look upon charity then, my soul, as the best husbandry; and mercy to the poor, the kindest thing I can do for thee. Seeing the "merciful man does good to his own soul," Prov. xi. 17. And let me not put off miserable objects, with the cheap charity of good words; but let my charity dwell (where some are said to have their ingenuity) at my fingers ends. Nor let me put off all the kindness, till my last Will and Testament, to give that then away, which I can hold no longer, but act the good Samaritan, to take the objects of pity, as I find them; and take the time, to do for them, while I have them, and have to bestow upon them; making my own eyes the overseers, and my own hands the administrators of my charity, in more care to send a great deal before me, than to leave it behind me.

But

But shall I then throw away all, to change places with the poor man; and put myself in the same case, to help him out? no, my charity shall begin (though not stay all) at home. I will give what I can afford, of my own, and not rob myself or others, to make the oblation of alms. I will not give all to one neither, nor spend my whole strength at one time, to disable myself for another; but so husband the kindness; that still, upon occasion, I may have it to shew. I will give thereafter, as the Lord has given to me; yea, freely give, as I have freely received. It shall not be wrung and wrested from me; but I will do it chearfully, counting it the best money expended; and blessing God, that I am in a condition for it; able to be the giver, and not forced to be the receiver. Sometimes I will go in and out, among my poor neighbours; and visit them, and their houses; and make my observations of their circumstances. The better to inform myself, how it is with them, and the more to affect my heart, that I may be the apter to remember them, and the stronger inclined to do for them. Thus will I look after some, that do not come to crave at my hands; and I will also give to him that asks, as my Lord has commanded, Matt. vi. 42. If his necessities (for ought I know) do put him upon asking, and his request be reasonable and fitting, his very begging then, shall be one motive of my giving: for, where I cannot oblige all, I will think myself most concerned to regard those that come within my reach, and that let me know their wants. Yea, though I know what a great reproach to the nation, and what a heavy burthen to the subject, are the throngs of common beggars, yet dare I not reject them merely as such, but will endure the evil, till I see a better cure, and not run into inhuman severity, to call for the law's extremity: for some laws, though not repealed, may lie dormant when
growing

growing impracticable. And whether there be not any of that nature, which relate to the poor (since they have been suffered so long to breed and multiply in a vagrant, unsettled condition;) I shall leave to wiser judges. But if I must err myself, I had rather do it, on the charitable side; and shall never be glad of the occasion, to save my conscience, and my purse, both together; upon the discovery of any one's notorious villany. Though, here I shall make a difference, and proceed with the best caution and prudence that I am master of, to inquire into the state of the beggars; whether they be poor of God's making, and such as are unable for business, or cannot have it; and if I have work for them, or could direct them to employment, I should count it much greater kindness to them, and to the public, by setting them a-work, to redeem them from a sorry, useless, lazy, vicious life, and make them good for somewhat, than to nuzzle them up in idleness, of which comes no goodness.

As I have ability and opportunity for it, I will endeavour to do good to all men. And as far as I can know them, I will do good, especially to them that are of the household of faith. And the better I find them, the better I would use them. Yea, though they deceive me, yet will I not count the charity lost, which I well designed, however it may prove misplaced. Let him that receives it be never so unworthy, yet worthy is he to be obeyed, who commands me to give. Yea, he is worthy also to be imitated, in doing good even to the evil; and when I know how exceeding unworthy I am myself, that shall check me from criticising too severely upon the unworthiness of others, and from seeking to be so much over-wise, in placing the charity, that my discretion should swallow up and devour all the compassion. I will not pretend a tenderness of conscience for the hardness of my heart,
and

and to hold my hand for fear of doing more hurt than good, when the Lord knows, that a covetous parsimony, and predominant love of the world, is at the bottom, as the main pull-back and ready forger of every excuse, to indemnify the purse. And who so witty here, as they, that to do their souls any saving good have no knowledge! who so full of evasions, as they that are emptiest of real goodness? some of the worst men, can shew themselves best skilled in defending their adorned Mammon; and cry out, how naught they are who beg, when indeed it springs from the root of all evil, that themselves do not give. They say, they dare not give, for fear of sinning; when the true reason, why they will not give, is the fear of spending. I desire therefore, to learn of some better examples; and not to suspend my charity, because such as these will not bear me company. Nor will I refuse to give unto a wicked man; if there be but any probability, so to prevent his growing worse; or to make him ever the better. Nay, sometimes I would give to the ill man before to a better, when his necessities are much greater, as I would help up a beast rather than a child; if the beast were ready to perish, and the child in no danger. But all beggars shall not be struck out of my alms-book; (for that name of disgrace :) when I find, that the great God does not disdain, to "lift up the beggar from the dunghill," 1 Sam. ii. 8. And he that suffered them to drop so low, might have laid me in their room; and for the sake also of Lazarus and Bartimæus, and other beggars by the way-side, whom our Lord, and his apostles, so took notice of, that instead of rating at them, they reached out relief to them: I will look with mercy and sympathy upon all my own flesh, whom I see in straits and misery. And where I cannot do as I would for all; yet will I minister, as I can, to them that lie nearest, and come in my way fairest; and

and by whom I am most importuned, or to care for whom I am most obliged. Yet all that ever I do this way, I will not count it any work of supererogation, as if I did some mighty matter to be proud of; but only my most needful duty, which I pray God graciously to accept, not for the work sake but for his Christ's sake, the great and kind patron of the poor, who once was pleased to make himself so poor, that he had not where to lay his head: though now (for so humbling himself) he is most high exalted, and lives and reigns over all, blessed for ever.

THE PRAYER.

“GRACIOUS GOD! I bless thee, that thou hast
 “given me the honour and advantage of dis-
 “pensing thy kindness; and enable me to return
 “unto thee some of thy own, by thy poor re-
 “ceiver's hands. O let it not be my trouble, but
 “my pleasure, so to bestow it. Let it flow from
 “me, as out of the spring, which thou fillest; and
 “not be squeezed out, as from the sponge, that
 “sucks and keeps all to itself. Let me open my
 “bowels, together with my hands, to the needy.
 “That I may be refreshed myself as much in giv-
 “ing, as they can be, in receiving. O what can
 “I give thee, Lord, but of thy own! but I beseech
 “thee, give me thy grace, to do it heartily, as to
 “the Lord. And graciously accept it from me,
 “together with all due thanks to thee, for any
 “such ability, that thou hast given me of thy mere
 “mercy, in Jesus Christ. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXXV.

Of some great mens severity to the Poor.

O MY soul, how often does it make me sad, and pierce my very heart, to hear not only the cry of the poor, but the testimony of so many others, shewing how much reason there is for that cry; of the cruel hard usage they find with those, who turn their power of doing them good, into an opportunity of throwing them down, yet lower than they are: and their over-matching, and crushing them to pieces? when, if they look upon the poor wretch at all, it is with such infinite scorn; as if, instead of being their own flesh, he were some horrible monster; to put them all in hideous disorder, at such a spectacle. And here, amidst all their mightiness, they might please to make some observations upon their own weakness: when even he who lies so extremely below them, has yet such a power over them, that they cannot quickly recover themselves out of the uneasiness, which his very presence gives them. If they ever will enter into parley with the contemptible creature: that uttering of their mind to such a one, shall be taunt rather than talk: and for the comfort of any alms, or relief, he must bear the thunder of their roaring threats, and many a curse. But let him dare to take the smallest thing, from them who will give them nothing, let him make the least invasion upon their rank superfluities, to supply any of his pinching necessities: and then the advantage shall straight be snatched hold of, with both hands, as a piece of their triumph over the miserable

miserable vassal : and nothing will serve the turn, but the intolerable malefactor must be pounded in their mortar, and ground to powder. All the cry is then for justice ; how the thief, the villain, must be trounced, and made an example. Ay, and the least favour not to be talked of, it would be such a wrong to the country, a protection of wickedness, and hardening of the rogues. How good are they then all in a sudden, and what warm preachers of righteousness ? all for keeping the laws of God and man ! what fearful exclamation, of the abomination, when it touches their sticks or their sports ! if the poor man's ax make an assault even upon the most worthless shrub in their wood ; or if his illegal cur be so rude, as to run in between their dogs licentiate, that they are by law established for the game, then the world would presently sink under the weight of such an offence ; if the strictest course of prevention were not taken. O dear Justice ! when it is their servant, to secure all to themselves, and set such a fence round about the whole which they have ; that none must offer to take the smallest scrap from them. No encomiums then too high, for these good laws : O what necessity of them ! O what advantage by them ! then it is not enough to be righteous, but they must be righteous over-much. Even they that despise all law ; and exalt themselves above it ; when it obliges them to do the justice, which they owe to their neighbours ; to keep their promises, and pay their debts, and discharge the duties of their places, and the laws that serve to promote the honour and pleasure of their great Master in heaven ; if they do not most notoriously break these laws themselves in their blasphemy, swearing, drunkenness, lewdness, and profanation of the hallowed season : yet are they not for executing them, upon any even the most horrid transgressors. Because such (it may be) are either their match, to dare them, and try what valour indeed is in them : or they are their favourites,

and their jesters, or sportsmen that make them merry, and give them some of the sweetest diversion of their lives ; to hear their profane drollery, and to see their bold impiety, yet the laws that serve to support their own worldly profit, or fleshly pleasure, they have these ever before their eyes ; and not only press them into their service, to catch every little fly, that strikes upon the web ; but even to squeeze out the blood of them for the pitiful offender, to drink it up, with the mixture of his own brinish tears. And though some make signs, and mutter, and others paraphrase, and give out words, and all do censure, and detest the oppression : and judge the great man, to be the greater sinner, nay even his own creatures and slaves, the tools and terriers, and blood-hounds, that execute his pleasure (for whom indeed, executioners sounds the properest name) they cannot but secretly despise the little great man, that no better employs them : and damn in their minds, the wretched work, in which they must have their hands ; yet on he goes, with the noble design of doing justice. And this justice he is so much for ; that one day he may have his fill of it ; if sooner he do not remember, to mingle more mercy with the judgment ; and if here the Lord do not make him a more tractable scholar, that he, who seems to have lost all pity for others may learn to grow more pitiful to his own soul, and procure a milder doom for himself. O my soul, as thou needest mercy, and wouldst be glad, in thy need, to find it : be as ready now to shew it ; and come not into the secrets, nor ever contribute any thing to abet the practices of those men ; whose very tender mercies are cruel. But what thou canst not hinder, bewail, and where it is out of thy power to help it, yet dislike it, detest it, put in thy protest against it, and instead of having any participation in such guilt, pray God deliver me from the way, and from the end of these men.

THE

THE PRAYER.

“ **G**REAT Lord of all ! who hast given promotion
 “ and wealth to some, above the rest, O that
 “ thou wouldst make them as eminent in gifts of
 “ thy heavenly grace, as in those of the worldly
 “ good ! and as thou hast filled their hands with
 “ great ability, so fill their hearts (in agreeable pro-
 “ portion) with tender mercy : that they may not
 “ grind and oppress the inferior wretches, whom
 “ they ought to pity and relieve ; but be more re-
 “ lenting and favourable, if not for their poor bre-
 “ threns sakes, yet for their own dear souls sakes ;
 “ because they are to expect mercy according as they
 “ have shewed it. But, O Lord, have more mercy
 “ upon them, than they had upon others. And
 “ have mercy upon thy poor, to keep them from
 “ falling into such cruel hands. Give rich men
 “ grace to be kind ; and give poor men grace to be
 “ honest. And give all men grace, to fear thy great
 “ name. Amen.”

 MEDITATION LXXXVI.
Of the forgiving Charity.

O MY soul, am I in God's stead, that I should
 take upon me to forgive sins ! no, it is not the
 sin against God, but only the hurt and injury to
 myself, that my Lord enjoins me to remit : and not
 still that damage neither, if it be too great for me to
 bear ; or an offence against the public, as well as a-
 gainst myself, and if it be not in rancour that I re-
 quire

quire it, to vent my passion, and execute vengeance? but to humble and amend the nocent, and to warn and prevent others, for making themselves so obnoxious. After I have tried all other means, without the desired success; then, in the cause that is weighty and necessary, I may lawfully seek my right by law. As magistrates and parents may correct offenders, and execute justice, as well as mercy, for promoting the ends of their government; so even as a private person, in momentous cases, may I defend and right myself, by legal remedies. But the ill will, I must forgive, and be ready to do good, for that evil; and "have compassion on my fellow servant, as my Lord has had pity on me," Mat. xviii.

33. For O what is he that has wronged me, but upon equal terms with me? whereas the God whom I have offended, is infinitely above me, and others offences against me, compared with my sins against him, alas, what are they, but as an hundred pence to ten thousand talents? what is a disparaging word, a scoff, a reproach or some hinderance in my worldly concerns; the unkindness of one sinner to another, O what is all this, to the enmity of my heart, or the injuries of my life against the Lord? it is this runs up my sins to such a prodigious height, that they are treasons and rebellions of a mean subject, against the supreme Sovereign of the world. And should I go to aggrandize the poor matters against myself, and will hear of no reconciliation; but am inexorable and implacable: catching my offender by the throat, and running all to utmost extremities; like one that delights to fish in troubled waters, and is for forcing the litigious trade, and forward to lay hold on every occasion of advantage: O what would become of me, should the Lord so aggravate all that he has against me? nay, if he do not exceedingly mitigate things in my favour, I am undone for ever, because still he has me lying at his mercy; to kill
and

and cast me into hell; and tear me in pieces, when there shall be none to deliver.

O my soul, there is no forgiveness which I am capable of shewing, that can merit, or precede the forgiveness of God; nor be its cause or its pattern. And wo to me, if God should forgive me, no better than I do others: yet is he pleased to make it the sign, the condition, and effect of my pardon: and a refreshing argument, to give me confidence of the divine mercy, for when I that am so evil, can have such bowels of compassion, O what may I expect, from the God altogether good, the original fountain of all mercy and consolation? and that he should oblige me to forgive, how great is the reason, that is, indeed, for me to do, as I would be glad to receive? and to what does he bind me, but what even the poorest in the world are capable of performing; for who that has nothing to give, yet cannot forgive? but be he never so poor otherwise, yet must he have the riches of God's grace, or else he cannot do it. For though nature teaches us to relieve the needy; there is somewhat supernatural in it, heartily to forgive an injury. Therefore heathens had it not in their ethics: unless to condemn it, as base, and unworthy of a great man. But we have a better rule, that teaches us, rather to lose our own honour, than God's pardon; yea, makes us to understand that to be our truest honour, which gives us the nearest resemblance of our heavenly Father. And we may observe, that the weakest creatures are the angriest, when as the nobler do scorn to seek revenge. However be sure, my soul, there is none so vile and undeserving in respect of me, as I am, compared with the great and blessed God. And here see, O see, and admire his goodness, to set me even in his own room, and give me such an opportunity, to fit me for his mercy! because if none offended me, there would be no place then for exercising this mercy:
but

but here now is good to be got, even by the worst of enemies, as we get honey from the bees, that have their stings. For their wrongs give occasion for my pardon, and my pardon of them makes way for God's pardoning of me. O let me not be in care then only to pay my debts, and owe no man any thing, but to have God's peace, and to even accounts with heaven. And when I am conscious and afraid, let me use reasons and pleadings, to encourage and embolden my belief of his mercy. That is, not to persuade God to forgive: but to persuade myself, that he will do it. And then, that I may not make the petition, where I beg to be forgiven as I do forgive, an imprecation on my head, instead of an oblation of blessing to myself; O may I never use it in hypocrisy: but really do, as I extremely need to have. And though I am not bound to trust, or to make intimate friends of all that I forgive, yet may I from my heart, forgive them, as I desire God, for Christ's sake, to forgive me.

THE PRAYER.

“ O Blessed God! how contemptible is the forgiveness, that I am able to grant; compared with the forgiveness, that I have need to find! and how inconsiderable are my wrongs, to be remitted by me, to all the crimes, that I have committed against thee! yet, O how stiff and hard have I been to pass over injuries and indignities? how apt to heighten them to extremities, and still to retain anger, and bear grudges? O God, be merciful to me, and pardon all my sinful averfeness to pardon my offending neighbours. And (if not for their sakes, yet for my own) make me wiser, than to bar up against myself, the door of that mercy, which I am undone, if I do not find. Yea, make me conscientious to forgive, for thy
sake,

“ O Lord, who dost command it: and make me
 “ ready, as a dear child, to follow thee, who art
 “ thyself still giving the greatest examples of it:
 “ that I may be merciful, as my Father in heaven is
 “ merciful. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXXVII.

Of fraternal correction.

TO warn the wicked and unruly, is not only the Minister's duty; but even such the Apostle puts upon it, as he exhorted to give a deference to the ministry, 1 Theff. v. 14. Indeed the precept is indefinite, to every one, Lev. xix. 17. “ Thou shalt, in any wise, rebuke thy brother; and “ not suffer sin upon him.” And the neglect of that friendly office, is there signified, to be a hating of my brother in my heart. For how can I cordially love him, whose soul I take to be in a sorry dangerous case, and yet will not so much as open my lips, to advertise him of it, and deliver him from it! but stand by, and see the wickedness upon him, and the damnation before him? and be so unmerciful to let him alone, as if I did not at all care what became of him? this is more cruelty than I would shew even to my neighbour's beast lying in a ditch, not to lend a hand to help him out. And is this my kindness to my friend, to consult his ease more than his duty and safety, and only claw his humour, instead of promoting his happiness? is this all the friendship and dearneſs, my soul, to ſee a poor creature entangled in the devil's snare, and hurrying on to the place of torment, and offer nothing to ſtop and reclaim him? be it a thankleſs office,

office, and the way to lose friends, and to gain enemies; what then? sure it is not their thanks, so much as their salvation, that I am to seek. Though they may be sour and cross, even when I most oblige them, and take that ill, which is meant never so well; my aim is not to gain their good words, but their precious souls. Yet I must not (I cannot) think, that all are such dogs and swine, to trample the pearls, and turn again and rend the admonishers, and fly in the face of such as offer them the biggest kindness. A scorner indeed is apt to hate his reprover: "But rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee," Prov. ix. 8. Nay, "he that rebukes a man, afterwards shall find more favour," than he that flatters with his tongue," chap. xxviii. 13. Though the reprov'd knows not how to relish the taste of the physic, but is ready to ruffle with him that offers such a bitter draught; yet, as soon as he comes to cool, and perceives that it came from a friend's hand, that the precious oil does not break his head, but works for his soul's health; instead of resenting the chiefest friendship then, as an affront, he will be so considerate and ingenuous as to own the favour, and pay his thanks.

Let me not then shelter my laziness and uncharitableness under that plausible cover, to say, I have work enough to do at home, what should I so concern myself with others, especially when it is to no purpose but to trouble myself, and exasperate them! they are too hard to receive impression; and how vain is it for me to think of overturning the mountains? all this is struck dead by the express charge, Phil. ii. 4. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." I must not think it enough, only to save my own stake, without attempting any thing to keep off my neighbour's perdition; but when the door is opened, and opportunity offered, here the not
meddling

meddling is a kind of soul-murdering. And when I never offer to hinder the offender, I do, in effect, bid him sin on, and perish. And though he has passed on above ten hours; how do I know, but he may be called at the eleventh? what have I to do, to limit the almighty Fashioner of all hearts; and to determine of the final reprobation, even of him that seems in the most hopeless condition? may not he who came to save the lost, recover that which I account as a lost creature? yea, may not he use my admonition, as a means of his salvation? how ill then would it be held in? when so small is the adventure on my side, to speak, and warn, to call, and admonish; and yet may it bring in such a blessed return. It is my part to endeavour, but God's to command the success. Let me then venture my labour; for I have lost many a worse: and this shall not be lost to me, when I but faithfully discharge my duty; though it produce not the fruit desired where it was placed.

However, my soul, here is a necessity of concerning myself, even in my own defence: (though I could shake off all the care of others souls) that I may not become accessory to their sins; and contract a participation in that guilt, at which I connive. For not to "reprove the unfruitful works of darkness, is to have fellowship with them," Eph. v. 11. And when I give (at least, a tacit) consent to the wicked abomination, I do make myself liable to their condemnation. So that I cannot be safe myself, if I am not (as they may count it) sharp upon them; and declare, and protest against their ways.

But that I may reprove with authority and efficacy the offences of others, O my soul, what an impartial censor and corrector ought I to be of my own manners? that I may not leave those whom I deal with, wide room, to retort upon me, to my shame; yea, that my own conscience may not lash

me, worse than I do them. And what need have I also of prudent advice; that I may not go upon bare hearsay, conjecture, prejudice, or the suspicion of a fault; but strike only at that which I know to be foul and sinful: and yet not with a like treatment of all, who may be alike faulty. For a glass is not to be handled, as a piece of iron. And the superior must not be rubbed all one as my equals and inferiors. Though I must spare none, where I have the call, and time for it; yet must I not be so rough with the tender, as the stubborn, nor so blunt and and familiar with the great one, as with those of low degree, but give honour to whom honour, as well as rebuke to whom rebuke is due. And I cannot but remember the evil how he has done it: so I must not forget myself, who I am, that reprove it; O how curious should I be, to chuse the proper vehicle, to carry down the disgustful application; and to watch the critical season, for a favourable reception? in what earnest to shew my zeal for God, and my indignation at that which provokes him? not playing and jesting with the sin, nor squibbing and drolling at the sinner; which were to throw oil, rather than water, on the flame; and instead of striking his conscience with terror, hardening his heart, to carry on the wickedness, which he sees, is made but a matter of sport and mirth. And yet at the same time, as I stab the sin; to shew compassion and tenderness to the offender; and let him see my goodwill, as well as his great danger; that my design is not to shame, but to gain him; not in scorn and bitterness, to taunt and revile his folly, but in love and pity, to promote his felicity: not to reek my sour spleen, but to open my warm heart. And thus let me deal, as I would be dealt by, freely, and friendly; with the smart reasonings mingling such soft expressions, that they who will not be converted, may yet be convinced that they have been well used;

used ; and must take the blame and shame to themselves, if they die in their sins ; and cannot be prevailed with, to be kind to their own souls,

THE PRAYER.

“ O LORD! thy servant David could take it for a kindness, to have the righteous smite him ; but how few are to be found of that temper ! how common is it with men, to count rebuke, an effect of hatred ! when yet, without such rebuking, I should indeed hate my brother, even in my heart. O then, let me not forbear to do him good ; though he may take it ill ; nor so much consult his humour and good liking, as his soul’s good, and eternal well-being. Help me, Lord, to express the true and highest friendship, however I may fail of the kind and thankful acceptance. Yea, teach me so to manage it, that I may not spoil a good work in the ill performance ; but through thy mercy, may prove successful, to save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins. Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXXVIII.

Of prosecuting scandalous offenders.

“ O My soul, how wicked is the world in which I live ; that it is not only fallen from God, and grown false to him ; but even all for opposition of him, and rebellion against him ? where so many do hate to be reformed ; and are so incorrigible in their
their

their vile vicious ways, that no warnings of God or man will serve to reclaim them ; but the lawless beasts of the people (the masterless monsters of mankind) push on head-strong, as wild asses colts, and like horse and mule, that have no understanding ; knowing no law, but their own wills ; no Lord, but their own lusts : men of such dissolute manners, they make only a scorn, of living by the gospel rule : and boldly taking such liberties to themselves, as God's Word never gave to any. They neither know how to govern themselves ; nor can they forbear to be offensive to others. Preachers they will not hear ? or hear them, only to despise and deride them : and so are hardened, as to be sufficient proof against them. So that they must even be given over for lost ; or still left to plague the world, as bad as ever they have done : if no other course is to be taken : if where the Minister cannot be heard, delivering the Word of God ; the magistrate do not interpose, to restrain them with the sword of justice.

Now, good laws we have, and such a good king, as, (by his proclamation, and otherwise,) has taken care, to quicken their execution. And yet still, may not the good man, who has a zeal for God, cry out, as Psal. xciv. 16. " who will rise up for me, against the evil doers ? who will stand up for me, against the workers of iniquity." O how careless of the Lord's holy interests are even many of those, that have most power and obligation to promote them ? between the smooth oily men, that carry even towards all alike : as if no distinctions were to be made, and highly value themselves, and covet to be applauded by others, for their sweet temper, and their quiet conduct ; as the common friends of all, to oblige every one, even, the very worst : (between these, I say,) and the open favourers, abettors, and justifiers of the wicked : whom they count themselves

selves pretty sure of; (being too well known, for ever willingly stirring, to hinder or hurt them, in this world: whatever they may do, for the next :) O how do vice and ungodliness, not only escape, but (with assurance,) hold up the head; and still prevail and prosper in the world? how do blasphemous miscreants, the generation of vipers, spit their venom against him that made them, and defy him, that shall judge them; and even dare him to damn them? O the insufferable affront that their common swearing offers to the Majesty on high! what a piece of rudeness is it, which none of any decent carriage, (though laying aside the obligation of religion,) would ever run into the guilt of, to be so egregiously malapert, and saucy, and ruffianly, not only with some of their betters, but with the very greatest, and the best? how have they lost, not only their religion, but their understanding, and their manners, who thus do they know not what, most wickedly, even for wickedness sake, and drive on, to take hell, even by violence; as if they were in love with it, because it is a place of blasphemy? but, alas, how will it spoil all the honour, that they shall also find it a place of torment? do they say, it is no hanging matter? but how many have come to that untimely end, for less wickedness, than robbing God of his honour, the chief jewel of his crown; and doing what in them lies, to butcher and murder his blessed name? let them see, Lev. xxiv. 11.—Such a fearful execution for blasphemy, as they shall never find in all the scripture for thievery. And shall we think then the small punishment awarded by our laws, too heavy to be inflicted upon them.

Shall the masters of misrule, in their drunken revels and excesses, pour in still to heat and inflame themselves, till they are all a-fire for the service of their master, and lay so many filthy brutes, of their own making, in the room of those reasonable creatures, which God made them? when all manner of
villanies

villanies grow out of this soaking soil; and the drunkard puts himself in a forwardness to break every one of God's commands: should he escape easier than such as break but one of the least? and tho' the lewd may seem to imitate the quietness of lambs, and the dearness of doves: yet when there are not (in the world,) greater plagues and bounteous, to create tumults and mischiefs, among relations, and neighbours; and to pull down judgments upon all, should the adulterer and the whore pay cheaper for their scandalous beastliness, than what it may sometimes cost an honest man, in an action of slander, but for calling them, by their true names? and shall the profaners of God's hallowed time, spend it, in sauntering after meat for their lulls; and not content to pollute the Lord's day, in abusing themselves, but they must disturb and sadden such as take care and delight to observe it? shall they all go on, without any check or mulct; as if we had no laws to restrain them? nay, shall men, not only do ill, but stand to it, and defend it, and struggle for mastery with authority; and even with the Lord Almighty, and no discipline be set on foot; nor the ax laid to the root of such topping trees? shall scoffers and scorers, that will not abide admonition, but snarl and bark at that which should save their souls; and snap at the hand that feeds them; and make but a jest of all the spiritual benefits offered them, and turn every thing that comes to interrupt them, into matter of a quarrel, shall they make the vilest pranks, their music to hear of, and the filthiest abominations their only paradise, to wallow in? shall they thus labour might and main, to enlarge the territories of their ruler's black kingdom, and see that it may be plentifully stocked and peopled? shall the incorrigible creatures, whose "neck is an iron sinew, and their brow as brass," Isa. xlviii. 4. flounce and rave at the bands, that would hold them

them in, and when they have the greatest need of help, set all that would help them, at defiance, and resist all that offer to be their reformers, as mortal enemies, and is there no hand that will venture to take hold of them? indeed the despisers of his word, (who are the most jolly and confident of all sinners,) the blessed Saviour of sinners himself, warrants us to pass them by, for matter of our sermonizing to them: because they are such as hew down all their own hopes, and no good is so to be done of them. Matt. vii. 6. "Give not that which is holy to the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine;" they are so curriish and surly to be dealt with: and so turn again upon their admonishers; swelling like toads, for being rubbed, and like serpents throwing out their poison and their stings when stirred, that their case calls for rougher methods: and sinners that are so blinded, and jaded, and even dead, ought to feel somewhat, (if possible,) to quicken, and rouse, and awaken them. And what better thing can we do for them? though it may look unkind, to dash water in a man's face, and wring his nose, to bring him out of a swoon: and it may look rude, to tear and pluck a man, as a brand out of the fire; yet to be so hard upon him, is really the biggest friendship I can shew to him. And if warning will not break the wickedness from them, I must then let my neighbours know, that I will not spare them, but where I cannot persuade them to leave it, I shall oblige them to pay for it. And did I give them any fairer quarter, I should not be like to make them ever the better; but myself the worse. Yea, they may rise up in the judgment to condemn me, because I would not do what lay in me, to prevent their condemnation. But my seeming severity, may prove the means of their recovery; and should it not so succeed to their good; yet is it good, that I should always be zealously affected in a good thing; and

and good, that justice should be executed, and the obnoxious punished; and that they who have been notorious examples of sinning, should be made exemplary also for suffering: it is for the good of the world, and for the warning of others; that they may hear and fear, and not dare to do so wickedly.

Let who will then, censure the sharpness, it was the praise of a pure and excellent church, Rev. ii. 2. That "she could not bear them that were evil." And though I will give the obnoxious no just cause to complain of wrong or severity; yet neither would I give any the faithful servants of God, cause to complain of my connivance and partiality. For I know they are the greatest benefactors to their country, that do most in helping to clear it of these very worst enemies that lie in our own bowels. And where I meet with the discouragements, which I am to expect in this way, the holy fear of God, shall embolden me against the slavish awe of any man: that the biggest transgressor may not daunt my endeavour; nor the highest, with whom I am concerned, make me dread to appear in his cause, who is higher than the highest of them all.

THE PRAYER.

"**G**REAT God! I am afraid to be cruel to others, who do so extremely need mercy myself. Yet as many of thy seeming severities, are real mercies: so, some, that men may count the harshest usages, may be indeed the kindest offices. O make me truly merciful to poor souls; not omitting any thing that in me lies, to stop desperate sinners from undoing themselves; nor scrupulous to use violence, when need requires, to pluck them as brands out of the fire. And thus, let me be careful to reduce particular offenders, useful in serving the public good, and faithful, to discharge
my

“ my conscience, as in the sight of thee my God.
“ Amen.”

MEDITATION LXXXIX.

Of pious Conference.

IT is a part of their character, who feared the Lord, that they “ spake often to one another,” Mal. iii. 16. And be sure, their speaking was (as became such) for the Lord; and like our blessed Saviour, Acts i. 3. “ Of the things pertaining to the “ kingdom of God.” For as those are the things most material and worthy of all; so is it properest for the natives and heirs of Heaven, to speak in the holy language of their heavenly country. And though the chief seat of religion is the soul, yet I cannot see, why it should be there imprisoned, and kept as a mighty secret, that no body must be aware of, the faith that I am to have to myself towards God, Rom. xiv. 22. is only in some doubtful matters, which might give offence to be promulged. But sure the great articles of Christian faith, and the known points of Christian duty, are not so to be stifled: when as the familiar discoursing of them, and the open signifying of our consent and heartiness to them, may do so great service to God, to his truth, and to the souls of men. For what does put more life into a cause, and more animate a party, than mutual conference, to declare our sentiments and affections, and to engage and hearten one another? thus do hell’s votaries, in their clubs and juntas, heighten their zeal for the interest of their Master; till they push on without fear or wit,

upon their endless downfall. And thus do travellers, and soldiers, and scholars, and tradesmen, and husbandmen, and all guilds and fraternities, discourse over their proper affairs; and fasten and tie themselves together, by such correspondencies, and interlocutions with one another. And must the followers and fellow members of Jesus alone, be silent, and have nothing to say of him, and his religion and kingdom? If we are indeed believers in him; O how can we forbear to speak on such accounts? for "I believed, and therefore spake," Psa. cxvi. 10. "While I was musing, the fire kindled, and I spake with my tongue," Psa. xxxix. 3. O! who that would approve himself faithful to the Lord, can see and hear him so dishonoured every day, and have nothing to say in vindication of his glory? what we are full of, how hardly can we hold in? but when it lies next our hearts, it is apt to pour out at our mouths. And can the true zeal and love of God be hid and pent up, to make no discovery of itself? can they that have their conversation, and all their main traffic in heaven, have no communication of it, among themselves?

O my soul, what a great neglect, and foul fault is this among us, that every thing is so commonly talked of, but only that, which most of all concerns us? that the most companies hunt away with full cry, after a wrong scent; and find them quite other subjects of discourse; corn and cattle, weather and trade, fashions and fooleries, the news of the neighbourhood and of the times, their lusts and pleasures; these are the things that employ almost all tongues, and engross all the discourse. "They speak vanity every one with his neighbour," Psa. xii. 2. And it is well if not villany also, to debauch the company, and draw more into the snare of the devil. But the best and most needful things, how are they drove clean away, with abundance of other
noise

noise and clatter? scarce a word to be heard of or for Christ, even among such as call themselves Christians. Instead of praising him, and his love; and recommending his ways, and encouraging one another, to continue still true to his service; there is deep silence, or such talk, as rather emboldens each other to slight his gospel, and run out quite contrary to the way it prescribes; as if our meeting and chatting together, were only a combination and caballing against him, to bring his religion out of use and request; and make it look as an absurd pedantry, and piece of ill manners, and a kind of affront to the company, to introduce any thing that makes for their edification and salvation, as if that were only to be told within the church-walls, and no where else ever to be mentioned. Not a word to be edged in among some companies, for God and the soul; but as soon as any thing of that harsh sound is started in their hearing, it must be struck dead with a scoff, or quite jostled out with any other kind of stuff. They will not speak as becomes Christians for shame, lest they should be jeered, or laughed out of society, for speaking against sin, among hardened sinners, and speaking for God, among such trusty servants of the devil. Such a torment to them is this melancholy discourse; they can be at no ease, till it is drove away, quite to the ends of the earth. But O what a deadly distemper of mind, and filthy corruption of the spiritual appetite is thus betrayed, when the things most excellent are so lothed, and nothing that looks heavenward shall be endured?

My soul! how should a holy indignation at such worldlings and epicures, and enemies of all righteousness, open the mouths and engage the tongues of all that are faithful, boldly to speak, and bravely to shew themselves in the cause, and for the glory of their dear and blessed Lord! as they must put
to.

to silence the ignorance of foolish men, by well-doing, so should they put to shame the silence of ungodly men, by their pious speaking. When God has given the tongue to be the instrument of his praise, and of our brethren's good, and the key to unlock the treasures of the heart; so as to make others partakers of the grace which he has bestowed on us: shall we frustrate the great end of speech, and turn it all to impertinence and mischief? when we may do such a great deal of good, with that which costs us so little; and by dropping a few reasonable words, may convince a sinner; gain a soul, startle and stop one, that is going in the way to be undone, enlighten the ignorant, settle the wavering; make serious them that are trifling; and hearten on such as have their faces already set towards heaven. Thus "the lips of the righteous
"are said to feed many," Prov. x. 21. When they not only shut out, vain prate, foolish chat, and corrupt communication, that do nothing but waste time, and poison the hearers, but oblige the company with that greatest kindness, of such speech, as Ministers grace to the hearers.

Here then, my soul, let me not stick to break the custom of an evil world; nor fear the brand of singularity, for speaking more than may be thought fashionable; when it is no more than my duty, and what every faithful servant of the Lord is obliged to perform. Though I would not speak as a babler, I know not what; nor talk of things holy and heavenly, in such a manner as to expose them to the scorn of any captious hearers; nor tell the profane wits, but them that "fear God, what he has
"done for my soul," Psal. lxvi. 16. Nor talk holowly, of what I myself have never felt, which were to make that insignificant noise, of the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal; yet from the experimental sense of my soul, and for conscience sake to-
wards

towards God, and the desire of doing good, I will not withhold, where I may make bold to speak, among the younger and inferior, and such capacities as are not above my own level, to whom I may be fitted to speak more agreeably, when others overshoot them, and soar in the clouds above their reach; or else, among such well-disposed, humble Christians, I will never carp at any, for want of their depth and learning; if he be but sincerely pious and willing, and affectionately concerned, to do all that he can, for the glorifying of God, and helping souls come to him. And with the higher sort of companies, that are superior to me in place and judgment, I will have communion (when I may) by asking them questions, to get into their treasures; and giving them such occasion, to impart, of what they have received; that so I may draw from them, to make myself the better, for what God has bestowed on them. And thus may I, both improve, and also spend my stock; and what my mind is casted, even to think of, let me enlarge the pleasure, in making the entertainment more public: that my correspondents also may share with me; and we may all magnify the Lord, and exalt his name together,

THE PRAYER.

O My GOD, infinitely good! thou hast every way obliged me, to employ the tongue which thou hast given me, in speaking of thee, and for thee; to celebrate thy works, and predicate thy word. And never can I better use it, than in such thy service; to tell what thou hast done for my soul; and send home pertinent applications, to the souls of others. I confess, Lord, my own sinful omissions herein; and bewail the common neglect of so laudable a work; and the
 “ general

“ general disgust of so sweet an entertainment. O
 “ thou that canst mend this matter among us, send
 “ such grace into our hearts, that we may not be
 “ able to contain, from pouring out of it in our
 “ gracious speech: that, (as thy servants) we may
 “ consult together, the interest of our Lord; and
 “ (as thy children) we may strive to exceed one
 “ another, in honouring our Father. O let thy
 “ saints speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and
 “ talk of thy power; to make known to the sons
 “ of men thy mighty acts, and the glorious Ma-
 “ jesty of thy kingdom. And let me produce out
 “ of my little stock, wisely and affectionately, as
 “ thou shalt give me ability. And I beseech thee,
 “ O Lord, to open my lips, that my mouth may
 “ shew forth thy praise. Amen.”

MEDITATION XC.

Of Mutual Exhortation.

BESIDE the words of exhortation from the mini-
 ster, there is the duty of mutual exhortation,
 owing from each Christian, reciprocally to his neigh-
 bour: to “ exhort one another daily,” Heb. iii. 13.
 “ And so much the more, as we see the day ap-
 proaching,” chap. x. 25. To be in care for each o-
 thers souls, and to whet on and put them for-
 ward, in heaven’s way. We are to “ consider one a-
 “ nother, to provoke unto love, and to good works,”
 ver. 24. And to observe and mind the case and con-
 cerns of our partner; not, only for meddling sake,
 to censure and censure, to find matter against them,
 and make a quarrel with them; but kindly to offer
 and

and apply, what we think fit for them to hear, and for us to speak to them: to stimulate and excite them, to a holy emulation, and ingenuous contention, who should out-do the other, in all amiable properties, and praise-worthy actions. That the companions of our pilgrimage may fare the better for our neighbourhood, and conversation with them, and their souls may find cause to bless us, for what they have received from us.

O my soul! I cannot think of going solitary to heaven, but must have my neighbours in my care, to get them along with me; and be their monitor, to call upon them, to quicken and encourage them, to help them unto Christ, and to set them forward in heaven's way. Yea, as a private Christian, I may have the advantage of a public preacher; better to come at them, by the interest that I have in them, and by my familiarity with them; to bring things that are suitable to their case, nearer home to their souls. Therefore will I be in care, to leave some remembrances of this love and zeal, every where behind me, among them. Though some are impatient, to have this best of charity practised upon them; and would rather be let alone, to shift as well as they can for themselves, yet the necessity of their souls is my call, to negotiate thus with them; and even to obtrude such friendship upon them. And here to hold back my exhortation, is like the withholding of corn in the time of famine. Here to shut my mouth, is to shut up my bowels of compassion, when I see my brother's need. Nay, it looks more cruel, even than Dives in hell, that would fain have procured a messenger, to warn his brethren, and save them from the doom. Shall I be so parsimonious of my labour, when I might, peradventure, talk a man out of his sin and danger; and open heaven to him, but with the opening of my lips? and if I cannot win souls; yet thus shall I please

please God, and oblige his minister, by labouring with him in the gospel, and discoursing over what he has preached, and contributing my help, to make the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hands. And thus shall I, not only approve myself a friend indeed to the partners of my conversation, but be kind to my own soul, and add to my spiritual stock, even in laying it out: for by such exercise, grace increases: by blowing up the fire for others, I shall warm myself; and it will do me good, to do good to them; yea, it may secure my supreme eternal good; and bring me to "shine as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. xii. 3.

But that I may be capable of this service, and stand likely for this glory; I must have, not only a well-furnished mind, and good acquaintance with the things of religion, pertaining to salvation: that I may be as the scribe instructed to the kingdom of God, who brings forth out of his treasure, things new and old? somewhat still pertinent to the purpose, Mat. xiii. 52. But I must have my heart also stocked with grace: as well as my head with knowledge. For as (in nature) fire begets fire; and things have an aptitude, to produce their like: so holiness in myself, is likeliest to produce the same in others. And how can I be hearty, in commending to them those ways of God, which I am not conscientious, to make my own walk? even the best words are but lost, in the mouths of bad men: and when I speak not from the heart, how can I speak to the heart? but though my natural abilities be smaller, yet being full of grace, and zeal, and love to God, and to his kingdom, and to the souls of men, I may reach further, and prevail better, than he that has the tongue of the learned, but no appetite to savour spiritual things, no feet to walk in holy ways.

I must then have the spirit of holiness, and to
that

that must I also join the spirit of meekness, to instruct such as oppose themselves, and so to soften the application, that what is well said, may be also well taken : when I am not for upbraiding, and bitterly inveighing ; to put the guilty in a posture of self-defence, struggling for victory ; but let him perceive, that he is in the hands of a friend, who has no design but to do him good. For though I out-reason him, yet shall I not gain him ; as long as I speak only to provoke him. I will endeavour therefore to convince him, that I love him, though I may thwart him ; yea, that nothing of spight, but my love it is, which makes me so bold with him. And bearing with his silly and cross replications, as the physician disregards the raving talk of his hot-headed patients, and goes on with his intended remedies ; so will I proceed in my endeavours to help and heal his soul, though I have but coarse returns for my pains. I will try to conquer his foolish aversions, and peevish contradictions, by drawing him with the cords of a man, the bands of love : and not only to affright, but to allure him into the way of salvation ; by opening the riches of gospel-grace, the love of God in Christ, and all the joys of heaven, unspeakable and everlasting : that he may see, I have no design upon him, but for his own highest advantage, and indeed his greatest pleasure.

I will not speak, in proud ostentation of my parts, nor insist upon niceties and quirks ; nor espouse parties and opinions, to turn all into vanity and squabble, which were to leave the main game, the grand concern, to go and hunt after flies : but I will be all upon that which is down-right necessary, and soul-saving ; and will urge it close and home, as oft as I can find any fit opportunity for it ; and may have but a fair hearing, and do not see danger of spoiling the design, which I am for promoting. But if there be only some probability ; I must not let it slip, in pre-

sumption of a fitter season : because the charge is, to exhort one another, while it is called to-day. And our day is wasting, and the great day of the Lord approaching. So that I know not how soon, the souls to which I would do good, may be snatched away, quite out of my reach. O how short is the time, that I have to speak ? and how long then must I be silent in the grave ? my neighbours are dying ; and then must hear no more, till they hear the last trump, and their last doom. And I am also dying, and then, must speak no more ; till the dead shall be raised again to life. And what I have to say, if it be not quickly, I shall be past doing the duty, and find no more place for that charity. I must then take the time, while it serves, to plead the cause of my Master ; and to make my attempts, for the saving of souls, before it be too late : and not let it alone, till some may count it due season, to hear the things of their peace ; but be importunate with them, and rather seem troublesome to them, than fail to discharge my conscience, or to contribute any thing that in me lies, to prevent their ruin, and to promote their bliss eternal. Thus will I do, as I would be glad to receive ; and my neighbours, (if I can,) occasion for ever to bless me : as I would bless the kind hand that shall lend any good help, for ever to save me.

THE PRAYER.

“ **T**HOUGH I know my duty, yet, O Lord,
 “ how prone am I to forget it ? and when I
 “ understand what I should do, yet to leave it un-
 “ done ! so that I need not only to be taught, but
 “ to be told of it again and again ; and to be spur-
 “ red on to the good, which I am so slack to per-
 “ form. And the whetting and quickening, which
 “ I find so needful for myself, may in like manner
 be

“ be wanted by others. Quicken us therefore, good
 “ Lord, to quicken one another. Make us faithful
 “ monitors, in speaking freely, what we take to be
 “ for each others safety ; and to approve ourselves
 “ kind and loving friends, in communicating what
 “ is for the use of edifying, not determined by the
 “ mode of the age, but by the obligation of our re-
 “ ligion : to advance the glory of our Lord, and to
 “ set forward the salvation of our own and others
 “ souls. Amen.”

MEDITATION XCI.

Of Zeal for the Lord our God.

O MY soul, if thou love the Lord thy God, how
 canst thou chuse, but be vehemently inclined
 to glorify and please him, yea, how canst thou chuse
 but be fired with indignation, at the wrong done to
 him, and the rebellion raised against him ? for what
 is zeal, but love in the height, and all in a flame ;
 that makes us so tender of our Beloved, we cannot
 endure any thing that opposes and provokes him :
 but the reproaches of them that reproach him, fall
 upon us, and touch us to the quick, and enter and
 pierce our very hearts ? I cannot then be faithful, if
 I have not such a concern upon my spirit, as makes
 me warm, yea hot, in God's cause ; and more im-
 patient, to hear him affronted, and his religion set at
 naught ; than to be myself vilified and damnified :
 yea, it will make me bold and venturous to engage
 for my Lord ; and grapple with difficulties and dan-
 gers, upon his account. Love is strong as death :
 the love of Christ will constrain me to do, though I
 also suffer for him. And till it comes to that, how
 can

can I find acceptance with him? if I set my interests above his, and am keen and eager for the concerns of the world and the flesh, but indifferent for his service, and luke-warm, to the advancement of his kingdom and honour: he speaks then, as if he were sick of me, and threatens to cast me off from him as loathsome vomit, Rev.iii. 16. And when all that I do, without this burning zeal, is nothing worth: O in what care then should I be, to get and keep out of the hateful temper? and rather let all the world censure me, for over-doing, than my Lord should disown and reject me, for not doing so much as I ought in appearing more strenuously for him. Though zeal must be according to knowledge, and tempered with prudence, that it may not grow into a wild rage, and strike in the dark, more to mischief, than advance that holy cause, which needs none of our sin and folly, to do it any service: yet, O what a devourer is the famed prudence of this world, to eat up all its zeal? and the men of the world will be so exceeding wise, that there is no such thing as zeal, to be found in them. No, let God's glory, and religion shift for themselves, and go up or down: what care they? let piety decay, and iniquity abound; they are very tame, and unconcerned: it does not trouble their heads, nor touch their hearts, but they can bear it, with an invincible patience. Though the majesty of Heaven be never so much affronted: there is no stirring of their spirits, nor boiling over of their zeal, as long as their flesh is easy, and their worldly effects are but secured; all is well enough, in their esteem: and what need so much ado? and why should men be so hot upon it, to reform the world, and force their neighbours, to be more regular and better, than they have a mind to be? they can well enough away with such, as are called the enemies of God; and that which his soul hates they can make even nothing of it; yea, be rather pleased

pleased with it, than aggrieved at it. Let the blasphemer fall foul upon their glorious Maker, they will never offer to avenge the quarrel. And this temper they applaud, as their moderation. But, O my soul, is it not such a moderation, as proves them to be bastards and no sons? for a son honours his father, and will stickle for him; and never endure, to hear him so egregiously abused, and bespattered; rather holding with the blasphemers, than bringing them to justice; to have them stigmatized and punished. "David beheld the transgressors, and was grieved," Psal. cxix. 158. And his "zeal even consumed him; because his enemies had forgotten God's law," ver. 139. And "do not I hate them, O Lord, (says he,) that hate thee! am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies," Psal. cxxxix. 21, 22. None do I count so injurious and offensive to me, as those that so wrong and offend my God. Therefore will I not fear them, be they never so big; nor will I spare them, be they never so dear.

O my soul, may this be my temper and resolution. So let me stand affected to the Lord, and thus let me be found faithful, in the covenant of my God. Whoever will be easy neuters, or false traitors; I foresee the time, when they will wish too late, that they had espoused another cause, and taken another side: and curse their caution, and that easefulness, which kept them off their duty and fidelity; for fear of some censure, trouble, and difficulty. Elsewhere, let my moderation, but here, let my zeal, be known to all men. The ungodly shall know, that I will not connive at them, nor be a partaker with them. And let who will revile, or threaten; I will not be ashamed or afraid, in so worthy and good a cause: where the Lord of hosts is with me, and the God of Jacob my refuge. While I but keep on the holy
ground

ground of his word; and cast not myself upon sin, in correcting sin; nor violate man's laws, to avenge my own quarrels: nor give the obnoxious advantage against me, for my evil doings; I will not be afraid then of what I may suffer for well-doing: but go on with my duty, and trust God with the issue. For if he be with me, what matter who is against me? and what is of him, (I am sure,) cannot be overthrown, but must at last prevail. Holiness is his darling, tho' it be some men's eye-sore: and what they now run down, shall come to be in everlasting renown. And though they spring as the grass, and rant, and triumph, for a while; they will soon go out in stench and darkness, and confusion and anguish will be their conclusion and their eternal portion. But whom the Lord finds trusty to his interests, and zealous for his glory, even in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, he will never leave nor forsake them: but stand by them, and for ever bless and crown them, with such honour and bliss, as have all his saints, remembering then from whom is my expectation and reward, my eyes shall be upon him; and I will be true to him, and never cool nor decline; but be so faithful till death, that he may give me the crown of life.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** Lord my God! thou art worthy to be served, and honoured and obeyed, not only with
 “ all fidelity and alacrity; but with the greatest zeal and
 “ fervency. Nor can I serve thee faithfully: if it be
 “ not also zealously. I am not upright, and in earnest;
 “ where I am luke-warm and indifferent. But who so
 “ well deserves my utmost vigour, as the best and
 “ greatest Lord? and where can all my mettle and ac-
 “ tivity be so well bestowed, as in thy holy cause? O
 “ gracious God! forgive me all my dulness and
 coldness

“ coldness about the work, for which thou hast
 “ made me. And give me love, and zeal, and resolution, and diligence, to grapple with difficulties, and break through impediments; and not
 “ stick at any thing within the compass of my ability, whereby I may approve myself, to be what I
 “ am called, even the faithful soldier and servant of
 “ my blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.”

MEDITATION XCII.

Of observing the Lord's day.

MY soul! canst thou think, that they love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, who are for disputing themselves out of his service; and take pains to prove, that they are not obliged, on the day called his, any more than on another day, to give themselves up, devoutly to attend upon him? It is enough for those who look upon the Holy One, as their worst enemy, to plead that they do not owe him so much service: who is the Lord, that they should keep a day holy to him? but to his friends, what more grateful, than the opportunities that bring them nearest to him, whom their souls love? how sweet do they count the confinement, to be so tied, and taken up, with their most dearly Beloved? to strike in with the flocks of his companions, where he feeds, and makes them to rest? and how does it rejoice their hearts to see him, (at one and the same time,) so universally owned and honoured in the world? to see all that name his name, and profess themselves his soldiers and servants, drawn out and marshalled, as armies with their banners, and flying colours, to stand up for the Lord of hosts,

hosts, and offering themselves, and all their services to the King of kings? were there any thing of misguided zeal in it, even to an excess of loyalty and devotion; yet should I count it a very happy mistake, for all the world to be deceived into such a religious posture: and to do that once a week, in more solemn manner, all together, one day, at which they ought to be doing somewhat apart by themselves every day. And instead of censuring our law-makers, for shewing a more than ordinary concern here to have the Lord's day religiously observed, I do the more honour the powers ordained of God, that they will so interpose, to restrain the libertines; who are for making bold with the day themselves, and also for interrupting and hindering others, that have a desire, devotion, and resolution, for its sanctification.

But yet, my soul, I would not have thee to look upon it as all of man, and a mere human institution neither: when indeed the very law of nature obliges us to set apart some sufficient portion of our time, to recognize and adore the God, in whose hands are all our times. And sure our Lord Jesus did not come to destroy that Law. Though the day of God's first appointing, in memory of the world's creation, is changed; to commemorate now a greater work, in the new creation; yet I cannot think that the thing itself is dropt; and the sabbath quite lost; or that the command which was graven among the rest, in tables of stone, by the finger of God, is utterly effaced, and nothing but a blank left in its room. No, he blest and hallowed the Sabbath, and it shall be blest and hallowed. For the blessing and sanctification follows the thing, not the time; nor is it tied to a particular day, but to the Sabbath, wheresoever it falls, by any alteration that appears to be of him. And though the old Sabbath is expired, because the reason of it is ceased, by a mightier and worthier production, than that of nature,
yet

yet the gospel, which signifies to us the abrogation of the seventh day, give us intimations of the next day after it, as heir apparent, substituted in its room. I will not offer to be so wise above what is written, as to tell, what instruction or commission our Lord might give his Apostles, in those forty days between his resurrection and ascension; when he spake to them of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," Acts i. 3. But it is evident, that they had their religious assemblies on the first day of the week, long before the New Testament was written; and then, what need to tell, that which none questioned, and every one knew, even as well as the day that went over their heads? or to give new orders for the observation of that which was already in practice and possession? and as Ignatius, who lived nearest the Apostles (and was St. John's scholar) signified his mind, when he bade (*πᾶς ὁ φιλόχριστος ἑορτάζει τὴν Κυριακὴν*,) That every lover of Christ should celebrate the Lord's Day, the Prince of days; so it much determines me, both that it is called, THE LORD'S DAY: which gives a good presumption, that (like the Lord's Supper) it is of his own appointment: and further, that all the churches of Christ, ever since, in all ages, have observed it: and only here and there, a singular humorist, or the profane generation are the objectors, who wrangle against that for which they have no kindness: because they had much rather, the world, than the Lord, should have them. But even some of the loose Writers themselves, can yet commend the care of its pious observers. For as it stands in the midst of the commandments, like the keeper of both tables: so does sad experience shew us, that even all religion falls together with it; and men run into a Heathenish wildness, without it: so that we need not be at pains to disgrace the neglecters and violators of it; who, alas! are so wretched a com-

pany, that use to expose themselves. O what will become of their souls, who do so little for them all the week; if they take no more care, but also to lose this day? if they think not the week wide enough for their worldly works, and their carnal sports; but must be entrenching upon the hallowed season; and grudge one day in seven for him, who giveth all to them?

O my soul! look upon it, as thy own market-day; and bestir thee, to make thy best pennyworths, and thy utmost advantage of it. Though thou art not tied to the Jewish ceremony and severity; yet never run into the Latitudinarian contempt and liberty; to make this holy day, even the profaneſt of all the seven, stand not all the day idle; to render it (*lucem ignavam*) a play-day, instead of a day consecrated to the Lord: nor change the honest labour, for wicked looseness: as those who rest from the common works, only that they may the better have while to serve their filthy lusts. O bear not this day as a burden; like one out of his element, quite sick of it; till he has got some vain diversion, to ease him of the fatigue. But be glad of it, as the joyful day, of meeting with thy God; and conversing with the King of heaven. Delight in it; and make much of it, and lose none of that most precious time. Contrive and cater, for the best helps thou canst compass; books and sermons, companies and exercises; to fill up the time, with one sort of pious offices after another; reading, hearing, meditation, confession, prayer, and praise: such a heavenly circuit, and holy variety; as will make thee a happy soul, so to bestow thyself: when thou shewest, that thou dost not need the world to support thee: and canst be very well contented, not only to hold in thy hands and thy feet, but thy tongue also, from the common worldly occasions, and frivolous vanities, and find thyself somewhat else to do, much better business, which
not

not only more concerns thee, but goes off so sweetly with thee : that thou art never better pleased, than when so employed. O count this day better than a thousand, for the honour it brings to God, and the great good to the world, to keep sin under some restraint and disgrace ; and to make religion thrive and flourish, and the gospel prevail and prosper ; to the gaining of poor sinners, and the saving of many souls.

And if any one ask me, whether I am a careful observer of the Lord's day ? let my answer be such, as in primitive times it was, to the same question ; (*christianus sum ; non possum intermittere.*) I am a Christian : and how then can I neglect it ? I should mistrust all my allegiance and duty to my Lord, were I not very forward and chearful, to pay him this homage ; one day in a week, devoted to his immediate service. Yea I should think my own folly never to be excused ; did I no better know what were good for myself, than to decline the heavenly benefit, and shun the opportunities of doing myself the greatest kindness. O forget not the blessings and revivings, my soul, which thou thyself hast found upon this day : and let this endear it, that thou hast fared so much the better for it. O pity such, as know not what to do with themselves this day, and can find no joy or ease, but in out-running the holy business. O what heaven do they think to find, in spending a whole eternity with the blessed God ; and living in the enjoyment of him for ever ; that cannot abide now to bear him, but for a day, and are all for shifting away from him, when the invitation is given them, to come to him, and wait upon him. O know thy privilege better, my soul, than to be willing, so to lose it. Bless the God of heaven for it : and so make thy advantage of it, that thou mayst, by this means, be trained up to bless and praise him elsewhere for ever.

THE

THE PRAYER.

“ **I**T is no hard imposition upon us, but the ef-
 “ fect of thy care and kindness, O Lord, to give
 “ the day of holy rest unto us, and lay such an op-
 “ portunity, for our souls advantage, before us. O
 “ how high is the honour, and how great the privi-
 “ lege, to approach unto thee, and to be taken
 “ up with thee? may I ever esteem it, and be
 “ pleased with it, and delight in it, as it deserves.
 “ O let me be glad to go into the house of the Lord;
 “ and count a day there better than a thousand.
 “ Fit me, Lord, to perform the duties, and to receive
 “ the blessings of thy day, and may I so love and
 “ hallow all the Lord’s days, while I am upon earth,
 “ that I may thus be prepared for the glorious being
 “ with my Lord for ever, in the kingdom of hea-
 “ ven. Amen.”

MEDITATION XCIII.

Of Profitable preaching.

IT is a notion that prevails with some, (to which
 I cannot subscribe,) that the design of preaching
 is but to convert infidels to the faith of Christ, and
 when people do but once own and profess Christi-
 anity, then it is of little or no use among any such.
 But though this be one end of preaching, to profe-
 lyte foreigners to the Christian belief, yet, so far is it
 from being all, that it is of constant need, even to
 them that do name the name of Christ; to build
 them up in their most holy faith, and to direct and
 engage them, to all the duties of a suitable life. For,
 alas,

alas, poor sinful men, need not only be told their duty, or taught what they did not know before: but to be excited to it, that they may resolve, and set upon it; and persist, and go on in it. "Though ye know these things, (saith the apostle,) yet I think it meet "to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance," 2 Pet. i. 12, 13. And the preacher is God's monitor, to warn the wicked, to awaken the drowsy; to quicken the dull, to reduce the backsliding, to raise the fallen, and to preserve those that are yet standing. That men may not take up with merenames, and forms, and shews; nor be so vain, as to value themselves, upon what they are called or reputed: (when alas they may have the name to live, and be dead;) nor be only almost persuaded to be Christians, but become such indeed and in truth, and (as such,) may hear what they are to be, and to do, more than others. Preaching then, is not only as the magnet, to point out their way: but as the goad put in their sides, that may quicken them, to take and follow it. It is to convince sinners of their evil, and advertise them of their danger: that their blood may not be on the ministers heads, and that themselves (seeing where about they are,) may think it high time, to rouse, and escape for the life of their souls; and flee from the wrath to come. It is not to tell them a cold and dull tale, to cast them asleep; or as if we were afraid to make them awake; but to cry aloud, and not spare; to speak words, that like daggers shall strike into their hearts: to flash in their faces, and throw fire into their consciences, to make them uneasy and afraid, to continue in sin; and in pain, to get out of their wicked ways. It is not to smooth, and daub with untempered mortar, and speak to please their humour: but to strike home, and make close applications, to profit their souls: to break down their strong holds, and force them out of their fastness, and confidence, to run in the sword of the Spirit,

Spirit, so as to divide between their hearts and their sins, and cut off their presumptuous hopes, and their predominant lusts. Not handling the word of God deceitfully; but declaring to them the whole of his counsel, and setting life and death, heaven and hell before them: that they may know even the very worst, and so, not linger in their sins, to venture the loss of their souls, but make haste, to escape the danger; and by a holy violence, take the kingdom of heaven. This is to lay the ax to the root of the trees; and hew down the sturdy oaks of obstinate wickedness, and throw the impertinent sinners low in humiliation before the Lord, to make them cry out, what must we do to be saved? It is not to jingle with cadencies of fine words, to tickle itching ears, but to come to the business, and speak from the heart, to the heart: what we feel ourselves, to make others also feel it; to make them perceive, that we are in good earnest, and thus, to warm, and melt, and inflame their souls. For it must be real fire, or some violent motion and heat, that kindles fire. And it is not to beat about the bush, and speak in ambages, and hard words, and abstruse notions, to darken the matter; but plain, and to the purpose in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: and by manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It is not for the preacher, to turn jester; to seek out pleasant conceits, to set his hearers a-smiling, but to speak in sober sadness; so as to put them in tears, rather than laughter. It is not to entertain them with crude and weak stuff, beside the matter; and shew the foolishness of preaching, in a sense too true, and too bad: but rightly to divide the word of truth; and speak as the oracles of God, to stop the mouths of gain-sayers, or make it their shame, to open them, in a baffled, scandalous cause. It is not to preach themselves, and vent their own passions, and turn the
the

the pulpit into their garrison, whence to let fly at those, with whom they have a quarrel: but to plead God's cause, and be urgent to prevail for their Lord, to recover and win souls, and as though God did beseech them by such his agents, to pray them, in Christ's stead, that they be reconciled to God: to be instant and pressing with them, and stick upon them, as those that will take no denial of them. It is not to be pusillanimous, and afraid of offending the great and the guilty; afraid of losing friends, and getting enemies, by delivering their message conscientiously, and heartily: but to speak with authority, as ambassadors for Christ, and in the name of the great God, with whom is no respect of persons. It is not only to speak at random, and dwell all in generals, or such discourses, as have little or no agreeableness to their auditories: but so to acquaint themselves with the state of their flock, that they may know how to give every one their portion, and to make the pertinent application; and speak the word in due season, to the understanding and conscience, to the doubts and scruples, to the fears and dejections, to the delusions and presumptions of the several sorts of hearers: to wound such as need to be lanced; and to heal the wounded spirit, and comfort the broken hearted: and all the while, so to preserve their own integrity, that they may speak boldly, and not fear any the sharpness to recoil upon themselves.

O my soul, what mighty things may be done, by such preaching as this! whoever take their freedom, and delight to be witty and warm upon the preachers: such preachers may prove too hard for them, in the best sense; and spoil all the merriment, tho' nothing to their damage. For what they count the foolishness of preaching, is the wise method of God, to save the soul. And the ministers of the word, (as contemptible as any do count them,) will be the favour of life, or of death to them. They shall stand

stand or fall, be happy or miserable for ever, according as they accept, or reject the terms, which these do offer them. O how many precious souls have been the seal of their ministry? and the blessed work, by such means, wrought upon them, speaks for the happy instruments, whom God has employed and impowered, to reduce, and gain them.

And cannot thy own experience, my soul, give testimony, to the praise of this ordinance of God! hast thou not been sometimes thus startled and stopt in an ill way, that threatened thy ruin! has not the preacher come so near thee, as if he had been within thee; to find thee out, and tell thee thy own, and make thee resolve upon a change? has he not, another time, transported, and carried thee up, even into heaven; and made thee look upon him, not only as the messenger of the Lord of hosts, but even as an angel of God? for certain, my soul, there is somewhat more than ordinary, in the living voice of such a preacher; to reach to the quick, and work with power upon the affections, where books and writings, of the same contents, have not such a force and command. And I cannot attribute this, only to the awfulness of the place, and the solemnity of the assembly, and the elocution of the speaker, but to the ordinance, and especial presence of God; and O what can it be, but the voice of the Son of God, speaking through such ministers of his word! when even the dead do hear that voice, and live? and tho' too many, are for slipping such opportunities, and applaud themselves in the fair escape, to avoid such messengers, might I but have, to my desire, of them: O when should I be tired with them! I cannot but pronounce the people happy, that are so provided; and I pray the Lord of the harvest, to send still more of such true labourers into his harvest.

THE

THE PRAYER.

“**T**HY word, O Lord, is a precious treasure, better than thousands of gold and silver. Blessed be thy gracious goodness, that we not only have it among us : but also thy messengers and stewards, to open and dispense it unto us. O make them faithful in their office, to give unto every one their due share, in due time. And make them successful in thy work, that their labour may not be in vain in the Lord. May they speak home, in thy name, and by thy power, to reach and pierce the hearts of sinners; and to edify and comfort the souls of thy servants. O give them the spirit of wisdom, rightly to open the way of salvation to others : and also the spirit of holiness, to go before them in it themselves. Teach them, Lord, and help them, so to preach, and so to live, that they may both save themselves, and those that hear them. Amen.”

MEDITATION XCIV.

Self-Reflection on the Author, as a Minister.

NOtwithstanding all the scorn that is cast upon the priesthood by a mistaken, ingrateful world, O my soul, I will heartily thank Christ Jesus the Lord, for putting me into the ministry, and making me an ambassador from heaven, to his people, and an intercessor for his people unto God. So far am I from being ashamed of the office ; that I do glory and rejoice in it ; as much as I may, when to be the minister of God, is a dignity worn, not only by the rulers of the world ; but by the angels in heaven,

ven, yea, by him, that is higher than all the angels, our Lord Redeemer himself; who "came not to be ministered to, but to minister," Mat. xx. 28. I only bewail my unworthiness of it, and my insufficiency for it: that I have the treasure, not only in an earthen, but in a broken and defiled vessel: and have been an ill ensample to the flock; and either too rigid, or too remiss in my applications; seeking my own honour, ease and lucre, more than the glory of my Lord, the pleasing of God, and the saving of souls: impatient to be crossed, and enraged at wrongs to myself, but not so much concerned for the success of his word, and holy religion. I have been a keeper of the vineyards, but my own vine I have not kept. My sinful neglects, I confess them: O may the Lord forgive them, and enable me, by his grace, still to amend the matter, and to do more and better!

But seeing I have this ministry, my soul, as I have received mercy, I must not faint; but go on in the name of the Lord, to make full proof of it: and by setting home God's truths upon men's hearts, approve myself faithful, both to him, and them: and so please him that sent me, and also be his instrument, to save them that hear me. Though, when I have thus discharged my conscience, in speaking boldly, and dealing freely, and rebuking sharply; and regarding the favour of God, more than the pleasing of man, I shall be like to lose so many friends, and procure so many enemies, and pull so much ill-will and clamour on my head, that never can I be able to bear up with any comfort; if not supported with the peace of my own mind; and the hope of better things to come.

For to be huffed and scorned, by proud, lordly sinners; (whose common theme, is the contempt of the clergy :) to be frowned and looked awry upon; and nothing but stomached and abused by all the guilty

guilty that are touched, and hold themselves aggrieved, yea, to be used worst, when we do our duty best, and find no returns but hatred, for all our labour of love: so thankless an office is this that nobody that meant to be faithful in it, would meddle with it; did he not overlook all present things, to consider those that are eternal. One would even as soon chuse to be a scavenger or executioner, as a conscientious minister; did we not expect another scene of things, beyond this transitory world; where the case will be so extremely altered. The small thanks, and the scurvy returns, from those, to whose souls we offer the biggest kindness, would make us even desperate, and weary of our life, as well as of our office; if we were not assured, that our judgment were with the Lord, and our work with our God: in whose eyes we shall be glorious, though Israel be not gathered.

O how often does it sadden thee, my soul, to see some of the flock wandering, and running to ruin; while I strive and labour in vain, to reduce them? and yet must I endeavour to find out the very things, which are my pain and grief to discover. I must be inquisitive and observant, to know the condition of my people: that I may the better understand how to make suitable applications to particular persons. And I must use great plainness of speech; and often inculcate the same needful truths: Yea, often must I speak, as they count it, out of season; and make more bold than welcome; and rather be censured by ill men, for barking, than be condemned of the holy Lord, for dumb. If they will not give leave, I must take it: and proceed in pursuance of my office, counting it a small thing, to be judged of man's judgment; and set at work all my wits, and use all honest arts, and with zeal and fervency, exercise my ministry: though I may seem a disturber of the peace, and troublesome to the men
at

at ease: that I may not indeed stand as a cypher, nor only bear the name of a minister. When I must give only an account; and be responsible, for the souls under my care, to do that with joy, and not with grief, upon which hangs all their salvation, or damnation everlasting; I must keep up my heart, and harden my face even against the sturdiest sinners, and make my way, against the biggest discouragements; not so much minding mens good looks or words, as the sad necessity of their case, and the eternal security of their souls. Looking unto Jesus, who endured so great contradiction of sinners against himself! and believing, that when the great shepherd shall appear, I shall receive a crown of glory, that fades not away. And if they that turn many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever: then may I conclude, that he who so winneth souls is wise: though to pluck them as brands out of the fire, he may be scorched himself: yet let men take it as they will: it is enough, if he that sets me a-work, is pleased with the performance, and my labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. Though I be counted as the off-scouring of all things I shall find no cause to complain, if he be pleased to take notice of it, to my glory; that in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, I endeavoured to shine as a light in the world: and though I did not all that I would or should: yet, was full of care, to do whatever I could, to glorify him on earth, and to help my neighbours to heaven.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** MY Lord, and Master in heaven! who hast
 “ been pleased to employ me in thy work, I
 “ desire to lift up my heart, in thankfulness for the
 “ high favour, and also to beg grace and strength
 “ of thee, sufficient for the weighty business. O
 “ make me a messenger for good, to the people,
 whose

“ whose minister I am ; a true friend of their souls,
 “ and the effectual instrument of their salvation. I
 “ have spoken in the name of the Lord, the truths of
 “ thy word : but in great infirmity ; and with such
 “ manifold defects, and foul miscarriages, in the
 “ way of my ministry : that I extremely need, and
 “ earnestly beg thy mercy. O if the Lord should
 “ require at my hands all the souls spoiled and hurt,
 “ through my neglects in my work, and the scan-
 “ dals in my life ; I should be covered with confu-
 “ sion, and sink under a remediless condemnation.
 “ But, O Lord God, merciful and gracious, who hast
 “ thy arms still extended, to receive every penitent,
 “ that sadly bewails his sins, and humbly implores
 “ thy pardon, pity and spare thy servant, I beseech
 “ thee ; and humble me in thy sight, and forgive
 “ me all my sinful omissions and commissions : and
 “ cause me to experience in myself, some of the joy
 “ of that salvation, which I preach to others : that
 “ receiving such mercy from thee, I may for ever
 “ glorify and praise thee. Amen.”

MEDITATION XCV.

Before the Lord's supper.

O My soul ! whither am I now going ? and what
 should I now be doing ? I am invited to feast
 even with the King of heaven, and to receive the
 most precious favour at the hands of my Lord. And,
 O with how great concern and awfulness, should I
 enter into such a presence ? and also, with what sweet
 repentment and cheerfulness, should I put on for such
 a blessing ? O what deep humiliation and reverence
 becomes the sinful and unworthy ? and yet with
 what

what high expectation, and mighty confidence, may we approach to the Lord of love, that is most rich in mercy? I must eat the passover with bitter herbs, and sorrowful remorse for the sins, that caused my Saviour's sufferings; but I must chew upon it also with all love and gratitude to my dear Redeemer; and with faith and rejoicing in Christ Jesus: that he would be pleased so to suffer for my sins, to save me from the endless sufferings of hell. The sorrow, for what I, a child of disobedience, have done, must not overwhelm my comfort, in that which he, the Son of God, has done; nor must I wallow in such consternation, as shall hinder and destroy the communion. For it is (my soul) a festival entertainment, and eating and drinking in token of reconciliation, and peace, and friendship from above: to shew that the quarrel is taken up, the wrath appeased, and all the indignation overpast. And it is not a doleful business, only to sadden my heart, but a happy price put into my hands, for the heavenly advantage of my soul, that I may share in the infinite fulness of Christ, to fill up all that is lacking in myself; and not only come to him, but be united with him, and receive all spiritual, blessed communications from him. The apprehension of my unworthiness, that is no bar to my acceptance; nor must it keep me from him, but rather hasten me to him. For if none but the worthy should be accepted; ah, Lord, who then could be saved? but according to the grace of the gospel, I shall be the worthier, for being sensible, how unworthy I am. And though I know myself to be exceeding unworthy; yet may I eat and drink worthily; *i. e.* suitably to the ordinance; in such reverence and penitence, and faith, and love, and desire after Christ, and thankfulness to him, as shall make me meet to receive him; though not to deserve him. Thus may I be dressed up in a sacramental garb, proper

per for the occasion : though to have on the wedding garment, this cannot be meritorious of the salvation. And such worthiness I must not think to bring to my Saviour ; but to receive it from him. For I am indigent and needy in myself ; but all my springs are in him. And to whom should I seek and repair, but to the blessed Jesus, that has enough to supply my wants, and to make me most blessed for ever ? yea, he has not only all happiness and salvation in his hands ; but a heart full of kindness and love, to bestow upon us, all the good things that he has dearly purchased for us. O blessed be the God of heaven, that would send his Son to die for us, who had destroyed ourselves : and that he who offered himself upon the cross for us, is pleased also to offer himself at his table to us ; to be received by us, not only as the atonement and propitiation for our sins, but the life and food of our souls ! so to stoop and seek to enemies (my soul) it is not after the manner of men ; but he that is God, and not man, takes this way, to deal with us : even when enemies, to reconcile us to himself, through the death of his Son. So has the God of love exceeded in riches of grace, to conquer our hearts with his kindness, and tie us to himself, with the cords of love. O what shall I render to the Lord for such benefits ? what can I render but the willing oblation of myself, together with my thanks and praise ; taking the cup of salvation, and blessing the name of the Lord ?

O my soul ! do not thou stand off ; but freely enter the bonds of his covenant ; not as compelled to it, but glad to find thyself safe in such gracious hands. When heartily to give up myself to the Lord, is the way of my peace and safety, of my ease and felicity, and I can never do well any where else ; I shall never have reason to repent of the bargain,

gain, in so disposing of myself; never can I so provide for my well-being, and for my bliss everlasting.

And that my coming may be for the better, and not for the worse; that I may not miss of the blessed benefit, but find him whom my soul loveth, and in him, all that my soul desireth, from him that provides the feast, let me seek my preparation for it. And on him let my eyes wait, to bring me in the right way to it, as well as to refresh me with his heavenly consolations in it. That he may give me the qualifications which he requires, and work in me all the good things which he calls for from me. O let me go in his strength, that I may find his help with me, and his grace sufficient for me.

My soul! this is thy feast, where thou mayest eat that which is good, and delight thyself in fatness, and with joy drink thy everlasting health out of the wells of salvation. Do not abuse and afflict thyself then, in seeking that peace and rest from the world, which the world has not for thee. Be not grieved, to part with husks and trash, and the shews of food and pleasure, for the bread from heaven, the meat indeed, and drink indeed, that are really nourishing and refreshing, but leave broken cisterns for the fountain of living waters. And being athirst, and also called, go and take the water of life freely. Go to that entertainment, which will make thee easy and joyful in thy very heart, to find a pardoning God, a reconciled Father, and all-sufficient Saviour. O look upon it as a singular privilege, and not a terrible duty. Do it as thou canst for thy frailty, and go through with it cheerfully; not doubting but thy gracious Lord will (according to what thou hast) accept thee. And turn not the ordinance of life into the shadow of death; let it not cast thee into a frightful amazement, but transport thee into a delightful contentment. If thou art weak, go to
be

be strengthened; if thou art distempered, go to be healed, and drink a little of this wine for thy often infirmities. If thou art unworthy, go and shelter under his worthiness, who can recommend thee as unblameable: if thou art unsettled, go to be established; and if thou art burthened with sin and oppressed, go to have thy pardon sealed, and to find rest in him, who calls to him, the heavy-laden to be eased.

Remember, that thou art not to come, as a chapman to buy; but without money, and without price, as a beggar, to receive. And if thou hast no valuable compensation, to bring along with thee; O what does the Lord thy God require of thee? he bids, "bring in the poor, and the maimed, the halt and the blind, that his house may be filled," Luke xiv. 21. Such as do most need his help, and best know how to prize his salvation, the God of all grace delights to exercise his power and his pity upon them. O let thy desire be to him: be willing to let go all for him. And though thou hast nothing to give, nothing but thy sinful self to offer: yet offer that, and go to his Bethesda to be cured, go to his feast to be revived; not because thou art worthy, but because he abounds in mercy. Go cast thyself upon his kindness, and taste how gracious the Lord is, that thou mayest find cause to bless him, and praise him, and magnify him for ever.

THE PRAYER.

"**I** AM filled with confusion, O Lord, to think
 " how frequently and foully I have broken
 " with thee and revolted from thee, after all my
 " solemn vows and mighty engagements to cleave
 " unto thee; not only the engagements of thy
 " laws, to awe my soul, but the engagements of
 " thy

“ thy love, to win my heart. I am ashamed, that
 “ I have been so unfaithful in the covenant of my
 “ God, and lived so much without thee in the
 “ world, that I have forgotten myself, and defiled
 “ my garments, and wronged my soul. And how
 “ can I now stand in thy sight, holy God! how
 “ shall I appear at thy table? the sense of my un-
 “ worthiness and sinfulness, makes me hang back,
 “ as afraid to approach my offended Lord, but the
 “ belief of thy abundant goodness, and my Savi-
 “ our’s all-sufficient merits, puts life and encou-
 “ ragement into my drooping hopes, seeing thy
 “ gracious ordinance is for them that have infir-
 “ mities; and the fountain opened for sin and un-
 “ cleanness, is for them that have their defilements:
 “ in the number of those therefore, I come, to re-
 “ ceive, what I cannot bring; and to find at thy
 “ merciful hands, what is wanting in my sinful self.
 “ O forgive me, and receive me, I beseech thee;
 “ and satisfy me with thy mercy, and give me the
 “ spiritual repast, that shall feed up my soul to a
 “ blessed eternity? where I may give thee praise
 “ and glory for evermore. Amen.”

MEDITATION XCVI.

After the Lord's supper.

O My soul! how exceeding kindly hast thou
 been used. though thou hast so very ill de-
 served! O what favour hast thou found at his blef-
 sed hands, against whom thou hast been guilty of
 such grievous crimes! my gracious God, the Lord
 of

of love, has entertained the enemy, as a friend; and given the childrens bread to one, that he might most justly have shut out, to lie with the dogs. I have had the freedom of his house, and the refreshment of his table; and instead of my due, which is the bread of affliction, and a cup of wrath, I have received of his mercy, the bread from heaven, and the cup of salvation. O what do I owe to the Lord God, my Father, my Saviour, my Redeemer, my Comforter! and what acknowledgement can I ever make, sufficient for such riches of grace, such wonders of love, as I have found; to bear down before it all the regard of my unworthiness, and offences; and oblige me with such marvellous loving kindness; not only without any of my merits, but notwithstanding all my great and manifold provocations? great are thy tender mercies, O Lord; and how great is the share that I have had in them? How dost thou confer thy bountiful favours upon the indigent creatures, that cannot be profitable to thee? yea, upon the ungrateful sinners, that do little but offend thee! so hast thou dealt by me, and such are thy surprising mercies to me. They raise my admiration; but they exceed all my expression. I cannot speak worthy of them: O may I live more answerable to them!

My soul! I have now given up, and given away myself, from my own, into other and better hands. And I cannot go back, but I shall run into grievous guilt, and expose myself to the dreadful curse. O that I may not desire; that I may not so much as think, so to draw back! for where, alas, can I mend myself? O where can I ever be better! where so well? and whither shall I go from thee, O blessed Jesus! who hast not only the words, but the gift of eternal life? all is in thy hands; and thou art the best of all lords; who dost not rule us, but to bless
us,

us, and to secure the highest happiness to us. Elsewhere I may please my flesh, and promote my worldly ends; but with my Lord is the soul-saving good; that which will do me the most and greatest good, even world without end. Elsewhere I shall be but deceived and abused, mischiefed and spoiled; but with him, I shall be satisfied and secured; most highly pleased, and for ever blessed. O then, may I never entertain the foolish, wicked thought, of slipping the yoke, and out-running the service; and falsifying all my holy, solemn engagements! but wisely consult my best and dearest interest, and conscientiously regard the honour and pleasure of my Lord, in cleaving still faithfully to him, however I may be tempted and seduced to turn away from him.

And when I go from the religious offices, to my worldly occasions; O may I have a heavenly mind, even in the earthly business! and when I leave the solemn attendance upon my God, may I not turn my back upon him, nor grow forgetful of him, but in heart and mind be with him, and still incline to him, and delight in him. The Lord knows how prone I am to revolt, and turn aside from his ways; yea, to run into rebellion against his will. O may he take care of me, and watch over me continually, and preserve me by his heavenly grace, and keep me in his holy fear, and keep me in his blessed love. That after he has spoken peace to me, I may not turn again to folly; but be faithful in the covenant of my God, and true to all my obligations to the Lord.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** GRACIOUS LORD! how hast thou obliged us? and how dost thou still abound in mercy to us? such mercy, as elsewhere we may
“ seek,

“ seek, but out of thee, can never find. For to ap-
 “ ply and stoop to the enemies that have wronged
 “ us; and whom we can easily master, and quell
 “ down before us; this is not after the manner of
 “ men; yet, thou that art God, and not man,
 “ takest this way to deal by us. And even when
 “ enemies, to reconcile us to thyself, by the death
 “ of thy Son. O! what manner of love is it! and
 “ how has the God of love exceeded in riches of
 “ grace, to engage us with such unthought-of mer-
 “ cies! yea, to find out such an expedient, as car-
 “ ries in it all the greatest dearneſs, together with
 “ all the strongest security, to send life and peace to
 “ us, through the mediation of thy Beloved, be-
 “ coming as one of us, and suffering and dying for
 “ us; and yet further giving his own flesh and
 “ blood to us (taken and applied by our faith) to
 “ feed and refresh us. Such mercy, O Lord, I have
 “ this day received at thy hands, which I desire to
 “ acknowledge with the most thankful heart. And
 “ (to crown this mercy in me) I beseech thee now,
 “ my God, to bless thy ordinance to me so, that I
 “ that I may find the heavenly virtue of it, in the
 “ spiritual strength and refreshment, that I have re-
 “ ceived by it, to make me able for my duty, and
 “ full of joy to live in thy love, looking for thy
 “ glory. Amen.”

DOXOLOGY.

“ **A**ND to thee, O blessed GOD, my Saviour;
 “ who hast given thyself for me and to me
 “ (for that greatest of all gifts, and for these happy
 “ opportunities to communicate with thee, and to
 “ receive the spiritual good, and heavenly supplies
 “ from thee, be all glory, honour, thanks, and
 “ praise, ascribed and paid by me, and by the whole
 “ company of thy redeemed throughout the world;
 “ now and for ever. Amen.”

MEDI-

MEDITATION XCVII.

Of the forgiveness of sin.

O My foul! what so grievous in this world can befall me, as to have all my sins in their full force lie upon me! and what so reviving, as when the great God, whom I have heinously offended, becomes so gracious as to take off the load, and cover the filth, and not impute to me the guilt of my sins! when I have so sinned, as to render myself obnoxious to the eternal penalty; and to make satisfaction but for any one of my sins, I have in me no sufficiency, my debt amounting to millions of millions, and my iniquity being greater than I can bear, and greater than the holy God can endure: he will not put it up, unless upon some righteous and honourable terms, nor shew mercy to the wrong of his justice; but an expiation must be made: and O who can make it but the Son of his love that is equal with himself! it is only in Christ that God reconciles the world to himself; nor is he only kind but just in justifying the believers on Jesus. O to him then let me look, and from him let me seek the pardon that I need; and here, be in such mighty concern, that nothing else may content me, till God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven me; for, without pardon, whatever I enjoy, or however I divert myself in the world, still I am a wretched man, and have even one foot in hell. The heavens then blacken over me, and a horrible tempest will break out, and fall upon me. Nor will a reprieve and forbearance here set me right. to make the conclusion good, that all the bitterness is past; for scores
that

that are not cancelled, do still lie on the file against me. And though I am senseless or forgetful, that will not at all mend the matter, but make the after-clap so much the heavier. To fall asleep, cannot make me safe, but will only betray me into a dreadful surprise. And it is not my speaking peace to my soul, that will make me sure, and give me rest? yea, though I know my transgression, and the extreme need that I have of God's remission, and (in order to that) the need of Christ's propitiation: and that I can do nothing to merit the pardon, but all is of the Lord's free donation: yet something does he require at my hands: to put me in a capacity of his pardoning mercy, and I must receive his gift in the way that himself is pleased to direct. I must repent therefore, and be converted, "that my sins may be blotted out," Acts iii. 19. For without my humiliation, I should be presumptuous, to expect his absolution. And as long as I persist in rebellion, O what likelihood of a reconciliation? yea, it is not only to confess, but forsake my sin; if I would have mercy, Prov. xxviii. 13. And yet still shall I find so much defective in my very repentance; that I must be fain to go out of myself, to take refuge in my crucified Saviour, and seek my pardon through faith in his blood; whose office and dignity alone it is, "to make reconciliation for the sins of the people," Heb. ii. 17. "And through his name, whosoever believes in him, shall receive remission of sins," Acts x. 43. What he has done and endured for sinners, I must apply it to myself, that upon his account I may be absolved from my sins. For when I know myself to be so exceeding unworthy, I cannot conceive how God shall deal with me thus kindly: but for the sake of one that has deserved much better than myself. Therefore will I open the hand of my faith, to receive what has been purchased by his Christ. And yet after all, I must receive the pardon

OR

on my knees, and knock at the door of mercy ; if I would have it opened, and pray the Lord, to hide his face from my sins, and blot out my iniquities, and forgive me my trespasses. For though he blots out transgressions for his own sake, yet will he be put in remembrance, and be intreated, to do it for us : and he commands us to ask that we may receive ; and loves to have his petitioners plead, and strive with him, in their prayers : arguing, from his mercy, his grace, and glory, from his power, and promises, and his own dear Son's merits ; like those that are in earnest with their addresses, and know how to prize his forgiveness. And when I stand praying, I must forgive, if I have ought against any, " that my Father also in heaven may forgive me my trespasses," Mark xi. 25.

O my soul ! though I have the virtual pardon of all my sins, upon my first being in Christ ; yet even his own members he has taught to beg for daily pardon. And where there is not a new justification, yet there may be (to the soul) a new evidence and ratification. Yea, the particular application will be suspended, till I do what (on my part) is required. And as the continual renewing of my sins, makes me need the continual renewing also of God's pardon, so to need the continual renewing of my prayers, for that pardon. And after I have been purged from my old sins, O how do I contract new guilt still ; from the workings of corruption within me, and all the temptations of this world about me ? from which I must therefore still be praying for fresh applications of the blood of Christ, to cleanse me. And O the rich mercy from above, and blessed for ever be the name of my gracious Lord ! that such a sinner may go and ask in hope ! when I have to do with the God, with whom it is so easy to forgive ; yea, who delights in such mercy, and has promised even to the wicked returning, abundantly to pardon :
and

and where the wages of my sin is death, yet the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** LORD, I have sinned myself not only past
 “ the power of counting, but even past the
 “ sense of feeling my sins. No malignity and pro-
 “ vocation do they want, to turn thee utterly against
 “ me, and make thee cast me away with abhorrence
 “ from thee. Yet thou, even thou, O Lord, art he
 “ who blottest out our transgressions for thy own
 “ sake, and will not remember our sins against us,
 “ to impute them unto us ; because thy own belov-
 “ ed Son has paid all our scores for us. Thou hast
 “ declared to the world, and assured us in thy word,
 “ that thou delightest not in the death of sinners,
 “ and my own experience confirms me in it, that
 “ thou art not willing I should perish. For had it
 “ been thy pleasure, Lord, to ruin me, O how long
 “ before this day, mightest thou have gained that
 “ end upon me! to the mercy then that so long has
 “ spared me, I seek and sue for yet further mercy to
 “ forgive me. Nor can I count it vain to ask for
 “ that, which thou delightest to bestow. But to the
 “ reprieve which thou hast granted I beg that thou
 “ wilt be pleased to add my pardon : and absolve
 “ me from all my guilt : and for thy dear Son’s sake,
 “ let me find gracious acceptance in thy sight.
 “ Amen.”

MEDITATION XCIII.

Of the Peace of Conscience.

THERE is no peace to the wicked. No, my
 soul; all the peace wherein they hug themselves
 VOL. I. 3 N and

and which they seem to enjoy, is only a dream and delusion; which arises but from the forgetfulness, and insensibleness of their condition. When they are concluding, that all is well, only because they observe not what is amiss: nor see it, because they have lost their eyes, nor feel the evil, because they are grown past feeling. But the true peace, they cannot have even with themselves, any more than with heaven: when they go on to do such things, as they can never answer to their own minds: and so, must needs go self-condemned, as far as any conscience is alive in them, and no saving good can they hope to themselves, upon any good grounds: but as they have rueful souls within them, so have they a dreadful prospect before them. And the peace to which they rudely lay claim, belongs to another sort of men, that take a better course of life. For peace, and great peace have they, that love thy law. O Lord. There is no such sweet satisfaction, as in the way of our duty; where we are fed with the continual feast of a chearful conscience; revived with the light of thy blessed countenance, and heartened on, with the hopes of thy heavenly glory.

Though holy souls, as they are tender, may be timorous; and even when they are safe, yet sometimes mistrust their own safety: nor have all those made shipwreck of good conscience, that sail in dark nights, and blustering days: but many that work out their salvation with fear and trembling, may be upon much better terms with Heaven, than others that rush on more confidently and pretending. Yet still, righteousness has the greatest tendency to establishment: to settle the mind, and make a sweet composure within; even amidst all perturbations abroad. Grace and peace use to go hand in hand together. And O the happy calm and serenity of that breast, where he (by his Spirit) comes, who hushes winds and waves; and wars; and makes all still and quiet before

before him! my soul, set thyself, to learn this way of peace. For O who can abide to lie on the rack of conscience? and what good will thy life do to thee, without comfort? and what comfort canst thou find in all the enjoyments of the world, if thou hast no quiet at home; but must be still on the ramble, seeking rest, and finding none to thy mind; because, alas, thy mind is all out of frame to receive it. For where guilt remains, peace keeps off. And thou art guilty, as long as unrighteous: and still thou wilt be unrighteous, till thou hast affiance in the Lord our righteousness. For all thy purging of conscience will never do, without the great purgative, of his blood. Let some vain gloriously talk as big as they will, of their uprightness, and innocence, and clear conscience, and good works; alas it is but empty talk: and it is not in my works, but in my Saviour, that I shall find rest to my soul. For live I never so exactly, and make never such straight paths for my feet: this will not clear me off in many points, still wanting and amiss: if I do not fly to the sanctuary of Christ's merits and righteousness. Still shall I be diffident of all that is in me, or that can be done by me, till I center in the only Mediator between the holy God and sinful man: and disclaim all else, to make Jesus my only hope. For the utmost that ever I can boast, what is it, but the main bent of my heart, and the general drift of my life? but alas, in many things we offend all; and are often at a loss, to make out but our sincerity; which is the only accomplishment, that we can now pretend to. So, that still I need a Saviour, to save me, even from the condemnation of my own heart: and it is only, when justified by faith, that I have peace with God, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.

But this notwithstanding, that the best I can do myself, will not quite stop the mouth of clamorous conscience: yet, my soul, there must be good works
and

and godly life; to stop confidence from running into impudence, and faith from dwindling away into fancy. So must I clear off old scores, that I may not come before the Lord, as if I would still stand to my sins. And where I cannot come without them; yet must I be humbled for them, and resolved against them. For O what peace can I have with conscience, as long as I have peace with sin? what good testimony, from a bad conscience? it must be void of offence; before it will be full of joy. For how can the corrupt tree bring forth good fruit; therefore, when pricked and troubled, I must seek to remove the cause; and pluck out the thorn, that I may have ease, and cleanse the fountain, if I desire to taste of the sweet stream. For what but uproar, mutiny, disturbance, and all to pieces in the wicked soul! discordant lusts, though jarring among themselves, yet can all well enough agree, to tear and divide it: and though they promise nothing but ease, when they come to be gratified, yet the compliance with them only gives them new stings, to wound our souls: and it is but like pouring down water in the feverish heats, that presently more inflames and torments. These breedbates then must be turned out; ere the soul can return to its rest. But when I become the Lord's freeman, manumitted from under the usurpation of lust and passion, a blessed change then I find, like the right setting of dislocated bones: or coming out of a tempestuous sea, into a new world of such tranquillity as I was a mere stranger to before. When the beastly lusts are killed, then do I live like a man. When the enemies are cut off, that troubled me; then shall I indeed have the quiet life.

Yet it is not every sin, my soul, that will break thy peace: if it only remains in me, but is not allowed by me, though my heart may condemn me, yet will the gospel acquit me. If there be no (*pec-
catum devoratorium salutis*. Tert.) such wickedness as
ruins

ruins all the hopes of heaven : the God of all grace will not then take me at the worst, nor damn the believer in his Son, for every miscarriage of life. No, let holiness be predominate, and keep uppermost in me ; and then there will be heart's ease, and my soul such a region of peace, where clouds are dispersed, and storms laid, and all made bright and calm. This armour of light will make thee bold in thy God, against all the world : when thou knowest nothing by thyself, but the common frailties of human life; no guilt harboured, no way of wickedness, in which thou art engaged. Look over thy accounts then, and cast up thy book, my soul : to see what remains yet, not crossed out by repentance, and faith in the blood of Christ Jesus, and make haste thus to clear it off, and for the future, use conscience fair and friendly ; if thou wouldst have it to comfort and befriend thee. O may this take thee off every wicked way; and for ever turn thy heart against the sins which thou art tempted to admit and follow : not only, that they will be bitterness in the latter end, but destroy all thy peace, even at present; and throw thee into the shadow of death, and the mouth of hell. And if thou make such desperate adventures, and run the loose risks, thy God will be angry with thee, and instead of looking sweet upon thee, will hide his face from thee, and thunder with his wrath and judgments against thee : yea, turn thy own conscience (which should be thy sweet comforter) to be thy cruel tormentor. O if thou standest fair with heaven then, know when thou art well ; and hold fast thy righteousness, and let no temptation in the world ever prevail with thee, to buy any pleasure of sin, at so dear a rate, as the loss of thy peace, and thy God, and heaven, and the joy unspeakable, and pleasures for evermore.

THE

THE PRAYER.

“ **I**N thy favour, Lord, there is life. But to live
 “ under thy displeasure, is to lie in the shadow
 “ of death. O what comfort then is left in me,
 “ when thou speakest no peace to me, but frownest
 “ upon me! and O what word of peace and con-
 “ solation can I a sinner and an enemy lay any claim
 “ to? nothing like it, for my own sake, but O God
 “ of love! for thy tender mercies sake, for thy gra-
 “ cious promise sake, and for thy dear Son’s sake,
 “ revive my desponding soul, with the sense of thy
 “ pardon, the light of thy countenance, and the joy
 “ of thy salvation. That so thy peace may keep my
 “ heart, and secure me to thyself, and fill me with
 “ such joy as shall be my strength, enabling me to
 “ abound, yea, and to delight in the work of my
 “ Lord. Amen.”

MEDITATION XCIX.
Of the use of Temptation.

O My soul! what is this world but the stage,
 upon which I am acting a part; for the de-
 termination of my final condition, in the eternal
 world to come! temptation then is very agreeable
 to such a state of probation. For it is the exercise
 of grace, and the opportunity for winning of glory.
 Virtue, not so tried, would lose its name; and the
 saints, if not thus put to it, could have no claim to
 their crowns. But I need not fear losing salvation
 for want of temptation, if I do not lose it, by fail-
 ing of my part, when tempted. For every man is
 tempted,

tempted, even the best not exempted. Satan desires to have them, that he may sift them as wheat, and drive them away to his own place. And God suffers him to winnow them; but only as the wind, to drive away their chaff, and make them ready to be gathered into his garner. The apostate spirits (dispossessed of that heavenly bliss which once they enjoyed) are envenomed against all, that stand in any likelihood to come and take their room above. Spight and vengeance is now become even their nature; and it is all their life, to seduce the seed of the woman, to interrupt the candidates of glory, to draw all that they are able, into their condemnation; yea, to vex and mischief even such, as they cannot utterly spoil and ruin. And in such a multitude of turnings and windings, does the roaring lion traverse to and fro, seeking to devour the sheep of Christ; that thou art not able, my soul, to enumerate all the stratagems, nor to discover all his devices. But I bewail it, that still the *prince of this world* has so much in me; and that I am such an apt subject for him to work upon; so receptive of his impressions, and so ready to execute his pleasure; that I have in me (the fomes) the combustible matter, to take fire, at his striking; and by my consenting to him, make myself even one with him. For the body of that death, which I carry still about me (and which, alas, I am not like to be quite rid of till the death of the body) it is the handle by which he takes hold of me; and too well does he know how to improve the corrupt principle; to suit his baits to my humour, and please me into sin and mischief. He takes me on the blind side, and breaks in at the weak place. And it is not even the grace of God in me, that can keep him off from me. O how can I expect such immunity, when even the saints of God, that have the greatest riches of grace about them, are yet most furiously

violently assaulted, and with mighty temptations often so overpowered and wounded, that they are fain to go halt and maimed to heaven, and with much ado, escape the damnation of hell?

Now does not the Lord see all this? and could not he prevent it! no doubt of that, my soul; when he has the *dragon*, that *old serpent*, in chains; and by an all-disposing, and over-ruling hand, restrains him, and sets his bounds, how far he shall go, and no further. For what can be done in the world, among his creatures, without the ALMIGHTY's permission and concurrence? and for matter of grace and favour, to whom is he a debtor? but he may give or withhold it; where, and when, and how, and to or from whom, he pleases? yet as he cannot be tempted with evil, so neither tempts he any man; but continues still holy and pure, from the sin and blood of all. Though he does not all that ever he can to stave the tempter off them, yet he gives him no power to force them. So that he cannot prevail upon them, without them; but the divine promise is their protection, that, *if they resist him, he shall fly from them.*

The will of God, it is true, is our sanctification; and yet is he pleased, that here we should lie open to temptation, and not be so confirmed in grace as to surmount all the danger of falling into sin, that so he may keep us humble, and make us better know ourselves, than to be exalted above measure, and grow supercilious, and disdainful of others; from whom his grace alone has made us to differ. He will let the old sink of corruption remain at the bottom, still to fume up, and sometimes break out, in folly and filthiness; to abase us, in the sense of our vileness; and to make us more circumspect and vigilant, against the enemies of our own house; and more to admire and magnify the divine mercy, that we are preserved in any integrity and safety,
amidst

amidst all the cruel onsets of our hellish foes, *that the bush on fire, is not consumed* ; and that the weak vessel, with all the floods, and waters dashing in, is not overwhelmed. O the good hand that keeps us ; the almighty grace and love, that is our defence ! my soul, see and bless thy omnipotent Preserver : for, O how long before this day, should I have fallen a prey, and sunk into ruin ; if my heavenly Father, my kind Saviour, had not been with me, and watchful for good over me ; when so many and mighty foes, within and without, have been all against me !

And now, courage, my soul ! and despair not of thy condition, because sore annoyed and pestered with temptation ; when even this may help to confirm my persuasion, that thou hast found favour with heaven, because thou art so assaulted, in the way thither. For the hellish pirates have the bloodiest designs upon the vessels of mercy, that carry the most precious lading of grace, and are bound for the heavenly glory. The tempted case, is a common case ; and the same afflictions are accomplished on the rest of my brethren that are in the world. Nay, the tempter had the impudence, to set upon my blessed Saviour : even the HOLY ONE of GOD, could not escape him. How then can I look to go free ? they that boast their freedom here, do indeed but divulge their ignorance and shame ; that the tempter, who has trodden down their souls, has also blinded their minds, and hardened their hearts, and finds such free egress and regress, and has them so fast ; that he need not much bestir himself about them ; when he has brought them to his own bow, and to do their own business. Their very security, and fair quarter at his hands, is indeed enough to make them tremble ; lest they so lie at his mercy, he counts it worth while then, that way, to waste his artillery.

But blessed is the man that endures temptation. And even at the same time, my soul, that thou bewailest thy sins, thy wounds, thy hurts, in the battle, thy damages and losses, by temptations; thou mayest also take comfort, and rejoice in the goodness of thy God, to support thee under all the danger; and to give thee a sense of sin, and care to return, and hopes of escape and salvation. O let not all the brushes and buffetings then, which thou hast met with on the way, dishearten thee from proceeding in thy course. Though grievous is the conflict, to wound conscience; and the saddest part of all the rencounter, to offend thy God; yet the Best of Beings can turn to good even the worst of evils; and to get safe at last to heaven, will more than make amends for all; however thou hast been tossed and tumbled about here, and carried by the very gates of hell.

But where thou canst not avoid, yet, my soul, do not tempt temptations; nor throw open the doors to the aggressor, do not give way to idleness; nor indulge to flesh-pampering; nor run upon the known occasions of falling: so to spread the net thyself, for the tempter to catch thee. Never consent to be his tool; thus to serve his turn. Whatever fine baits thou seest, over the deadly hooks: O look upon it all but as cheat and trick; and shrink back then, and resist stedfast in the faith. And where thou art too weak for the strong one, call in a better help than thy own; cry out, like the forced damsel, and make thy complaint to heaven, beseeching the Lord, that the *messenger of Satan* may depart from thee; that thou mayest not be tempted above thy strength, but receive the power from on high, which may make thee strong in the Lord; and mayest still find him greater that is in thee, than he that is in the world, till at last, thou art got past all the pain and peril, care and concern,
to

to that sure sanctuary, and blessed retreat, in the heavenly rest, and everlasting joy of thy Lord : where thou wilt no more offend him, nor have any temptation to it, nor further trouble upon that account, world without end.

THE PRAYER.

“ **L** ORD, if it be thy will, that I should grapple with temptations ; I will not desire them wholly to be exempted from them ; but only to be supported under them, and carried safe through them, and set above the evil and danger of them : that I may not be hurt, but bettered by them. O give me the disturbance that shall rouse me out of an ill case, and awaken my care, and quicken me to the livelier discharge of my duty. The evils which I cannot foresee, be pleased, Lord, to prevent : and those which I cannot avoid, but must encounter, O do thou enable me to overcome : that I may not sink under them ; but by the powerful defence of thy good hand, be kept safe ; till I reach to the blessed period of all my trials and travails, my labours and troubles ; and shall be out of all this pain and peril, this care and concern, in the heavenly rest, and everlasting joy of my Lord. “ Amen.”

MEDITATION C.

Of Perseverance.

OF all the promises of God, none so reviving and encouraging to my timorous mind, as those, of his perfecting what concerns us, and crown-
ing

ing his own gracious work in us. To hear, that his gifts and calling are without repentance, and his mercy, like himself, endures for ever; that he will give his sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, nor any pluck them out of his hands; that when I am so mutable, and prone to fall away, and spoil myself, his love, which is an everlasting love, will not lose me so, nor his grace, that is a well of water, springing up to everlasting life, be dried up: but abound, even over all my abounding sins, and make me safer than Adam was in the very state of innocence, because it gives me, not only the power to stand, if I will, but the will to persist, and endure to the end: nor only sets me up, to stand on my own legs, but in the strength of Christ, and keeps me by the power of God, through faith, to salvation: and when I am so often at a loss, will guide me with his council, till he receive me into glory. That “mountains and hills shall be removed, sooner than the covenant of his peace,” Isa. liv. 10. And by that everlasting covenant, he has not only engaged himself, “not to turn away from me, to do me good; but to put his fear into my heart, that I shall not depart from him,” Jer. xxxii. 40.

I know then, my soul, whom I have believed; and how faithful he is, that has promised. And if the Lord has said it; I will not question: but set my heart at rest; and build upon the sure foundation of his word; that shall never pass away. It is he who has wrought all my works in me, that must ordain peace for me; and carry on the good work begun, till the day of Jesus Christ. I mistrust myself: and too much do I know of my own heart, to repose any confidence in it: all my sufficiency is of God, and all my expectation from the Lord. Without him, I can do nothing. O no; I shall be gone: I shall be undone: if I am not upheld and secured by his help and defence. But to him will I look, for the accomplishment

complishment of his own gracious designs, set on foot in my soul. For can I think, that he, who looked upon me in my blood, to bid me live, will suffer me to miscarry, after he has shewed me such mercy? if he would bestow his grace upon me, when there was nothing of invitation in me: yea, when I was, not only a stranger, but an enemy; that had enough to turn him all against me: sure he will not neglect to cultivate the plant of his own planting, nor to cherish that heavenly production; which is the seed, and the very life of God, in my soul.

Though he will forsake those that forsake him: yet never shall they forsake him, whom he has " betrothed to himself for ever," Hof. ii. 19. Though grace has its ebbs and flows: and they that have it, do often rise and fall: yet there is a promise that is their security, from falling away finally, Psal. xxxvii. 24. " Though the good man fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholds him with his hand." Such then, as we read of in holy scripture, falling away, they did but seem to stand; or else but seem to be gone: when indeed, they were no final apostates. " They went out from us; (saith the apostle, 1 John ii. 19.) but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us." And though we must endure to the end, that we may be saved: yet the suppositions of their going to ruin, who have known the grace of God in truth, are no assertions of the thing: but cautions to our revolting hearts, and spurs to our sluggish minds, and such incitements of our watchfulness and diligence; that we may not tempt the Lord our God, to go and cast ourselves down precipices, nor run into the mouth of danger, but be shy and wary, to keep off from the occasions of falling; and follow him with our supplications, and strong cries, that is able to keep us from it: and so these very intimations of our peril, are indeed the Lord's

Lord's means of preserving us to his heavenly kingdom.

But they that would rob the church of this doctrine, go the way to undermine the surest ground of consolation, that I know of in the world. Without which, O how hollow is the comfort; even when we are got in the holiest frame: were frail creatures, not withheld by an almighty hand from undoing themselves.

And yet so far is the doctrine, (well taken,) from emboldening men in any ill ways, that I know not a more forcible motive to all holy, chearful obedience; than, that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; and that he will never leave nor forsake us, but still take care of us, and watch for good over us, till he has raised us above all the danger; and fixed us safe, in the joy of our Lord. O what will so wing us, with love and zeal, to live to such a Lord; and to abound in his work, and lay out ourselves, to express the eternal thanks of our hearts, for the everlasting obligation laid on our souls!

For consider it, my soul! shall nothing be able to separate me from the love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord? O what manner of love then is this? that not only makes me rejoice in hope of the glory of God, but to know that I have eternal life; as sure as I have any spiritual life: because grace is not only the fore-runner, but the prepossession of glory, and somewhat of it even in hand already. And wherever is the new creation in Christ Jesus; never will God forsake that work of his own hands. O then, my soul, shall I not love him, that has first so loved me? when my Beloved will be mine; shall I not be also for ever his? yes, I will. Seeing he will not part with me, I will hold him, and not let him go. No, the world shall never part between me and my Lord, who when the world fails me, will stick to me; and after it can stand me in no further stead, will not cease

cease to do me good ; but be my blessed portion for ever. Amen.

THE PRAYER.

“ **O** How apt am I, Lord, to be led away of my
“ own lusts, and enticed, yea, to yield to the
“ temptation, and prove false to my God, and fall
“ away from thee : if thou hold not up my goings
“ in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not ! I cannot
“ preserve and help myself : I shall spoil and lose all,
“ if thou, Lord Almighty, be not my defence and
“ security. To thee, therefore, I look, and upon
“ thee alone I depend, for the compleating of what
“ thy own grace has begun in me. O let me find
“ my good God still too strong for the wicked one,
“ to keep me in the way of salvation, upon which
“ thou hast sent me : that I may never fall away
“ from thee ; nor let go the hold of thy grace, and
“ the hope of thy glory, which thou hast given me.
“ But when I fall, Lord, do thou raise me ; when I
“ stray, reduce me, and tie me afresh to thyself,
“ with the cords of love ; and never suffer me to un-
“ do myself. But amidst all the revolutions and
“ uncertainties of this world, and all the frailty and
“ mutability in my ownself, here let me find the
“ rock to build upon, the foundation of the Lord,
“ which standeth sure, the free grace, and good
“ pleasure of my God, who changeth not ; but hav-
“ ing loved his own, loves them to the end, and
“ without any end. To whom, therefore, be all
“ glory world without end. Amen.”

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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